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DIVINE TRANSCENDENCE

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DIVINE TRANSCENDENCE

AND ITS REFLECTION IN RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

AN ESSAY

BY

J. R. ILLINGWORTH, M.A., D.D.

ἔστι τι ὃ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ, ἀΐδιον καὶ οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργεια οὖσα . . . ὀρεγόμεθα δὲ διότι δοκεῖ μᾶλλον ἢ δοκεῖ διότι ὀρεγόμεθα.

ARISTOTLE, *Meta.*

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PREFACE

It is now more than twelve years since I published an essay on divine immanence, considered as one aspect of a dual truth which was stated in the following words:—"Christianity, with its correlative doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, laid equal stress both on the transcendence and the immanence of God, or in less technical terms upon His supremacy, and His omnipresence."[1] But in the interval the latter phrase has been frequently employed as though it were an exclusive alternative to the former; with the result that such has come to be its natural meaning and implication for many minds. In other words, it has been diverted from a Christian to a pantheistic use. I have endeavoured, therefore, in the ensuing pages to recall attention to the complementary conception

[1] *Divine Immanence.*

of divine transcendence; as being, from the Christian point of view, presupposed, and not precluded by that of immanence; and further to point out its intimate connection with the note of spiritual, and, in that sense, supernatural authority, which distinguishes the organization, faith, and worship of the Church, and leads to a correlative element of obedience in the character of its members.

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CHAPTER I

EFFECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL BIAS

"MODERN thought" is a phrase with which we are nowadays very familiar, but it is a somewhat misleading phrase; for it seems to give a kind of fictitious unity to a number of what are in fact heterogeneous opinions. It thus tends to stereotype a fallacy—the fallacy that there is any one type or tendency of thought which can be called distinctively and characteristically modern. Whereas a really complete survey of contemporary opinion would disclose in it variety rather than unity—a multitude of incoherent and often incompatible points of view, all of which may in a sense be called modern, though many have ancient analogues; but none of which can claim to be typically representative of the age. While, further, such unity as there seems sometimes to be is often more apparent than real.

For many of the current expressions which we all use—words, for example, like "evolution" or "experience" or "reality"—mean such different things to different minds that their common employment does but darken counsel by implying an amount of agreement which does not in fact exist. There were never so many writers, and therefore, presumably, thinkers of a kind, as in the present day, and *quot hominum tot sententiae* is a proverb that is never obsolete.

In other words there is no one modern view of the world to be accepted or rejected in the block. But there are many views which approximate and interlace and then diverge—currents, and cross-currents, and rapids, and backwaters of thought—which must be discriminated and judged on their individual merits.

Moreover, modern thought, being of this complex and many-sided character, is neither altogether so good nor so bad as it is sometimes represented to be. We can easily recognize the admixture of truth with error in bygone ages, and may reasonably, therefore, suspect a similar condition in our own. Some of our present opinions will doubtless persist and thereby prove their truth; others will disappear and thereby

expose their falsehood. While even the best opinions may, like men, have "the defects of their qualities," elements of congenial error commingled with their truth. For in a world that is tainted throughout by moral evil, the mere increase of knowledge does not necessarily insure its correct use.

Now one of the most essentially modern of our sciences is psychology; if it is yet entitled to be called a science, which some of its students deny; the science or, at least, the description of our various mental processes. This, like all other special sciences, is abstract in the sense that it makes abstraction of its particular subject-matter, and then studies it in artificial isolation from the context wherein alone it actually and always lives. Thus psychology deals with the growth and nature and faculties and methods of the mind in its widest sense—how we feel, and think, and will; and can never legitimately treat the further question, as to what we think, and why we think—the ultimate nature of the objects of thought, and the final cause of our existence as thinking beings, at all. The nature of this distinction may be easily illustrated from the case of any other science. An oculist, for example,

will give us an elaborate and fascinating explanation of the marvellous mechanism with which we see, and all the complex process of its operation. But he cannot, as such, as far, that is, as he is simply an oculist, tell us what the particular objects in a distant landscape are, or what the effects of a sunset or moonrise will be upon our inmost soul. Or an aurist again may teach us the delicate structure and intricate convolutions of the ear, and the method in which its function is performed. But he cannot, as such, tell us the meaning of a symphony of Beethoven, or how the hearing of it may influence our life. While the significance of such sayings as "Turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity," or "Take heed what ye hear," will be still more remote from the scientific cognizance of either. So distant is the how from the what and why of our feeling and thought. Thus psychology can trace the process by which our knowledge is acquired, but not the value or meaning of that knowledge, which is a question for metaphysic or philosophy.

But specialists generally tend to overestimate the relative importance of their own speciality; particularly at a time when they have achieved

rapid and striking results, as has been the case with the study in question, of recent years. Hence there has lately arisen a disposition, explicit and articulate in some cases, inarticulate and unconscious in many more, to substitute psychology for philosophy; either by adopting a frankly agnostic attitude towards all metaphysic, as dealing with things beyond our ken, or by so shifting the emphasis and interests from the philosophic to the psychological aspect of knowledge as to leave the former out of account. This psychological tendency, then, so to call it, is in the air, widely diffused beyond the ranks of those who are fully conscious of its operation. And, however the metaphysicians may smile or sigh, it colours our modern treatment of many problems to an undue degree.

And nowhere is this more marked than in its influence on man's attitude towards religion and theology.

We are told, for instance, in certain quarters, that the older conception of God as transcendent —sitting above the water-floods and remaining a king for ever—is being superseded by the conception of His immanence or indwelling presence in nature and the human soul.

Akin to this there is a widespread disposition to base religion exclusively on inner experience or spiritual insight or feeling :

> I have no name to give it,
> Feeling is all in all.

With this, again, agrees the increased interest taken in the mental process by which our religious ideas are acquired, and the influence upon them of the emotions and the will to believe ; leading to the common use of phrases like the "evolution of religion" or "evolution of the idea of God."

The same thing reappears in much of our Biblical criticism. In the New Testament, for instance, attempts are made to trace the rise and growth of Our Lord's consciousness of His person and office. While stress is laid upon the psychology of the various writers—their personal idiosyncrasy as affecting their treatment of history and doctrine.

And with all this there is an increase of religious individualism. Personal experience and private judgment are emphasized as against all that is external or institutional in the life, or traditional and dogmatic in the teaching of the

Christian society. This, of course, in itself is no new thing; but it has received a new impetus of recent years.

Now all these views contain elements, and often important elements of truth; but taken together they show a tendency, if not of the modern mind, as such, at least of many modern minds, to be one-sided in their appreciation of religion; to exalt what in the common phrase is called its subjective over its objective and authoritative element.

It may be granted at once that we cannot now attempt either to locate or define authority as precisely as was done in bygone days. The authority of reason, the authority of conscience, the authority of the Bible, the authority of the Church are all phrases which at once raise complex difficulties of thought. They have lost something of the clear-cut character and definite outline which they once possessed. But this need not mean that they have lost their reality. On the contrary it is mainly due to the fact, or to our increased appreciation of the fact, that all such authority is a living thing. For we cannot classify or define living things as completely as abstract conceptions; since living things, from the very fact of being alive, are always in a state

of change, and cannot be arrested in a static condition. While we are painting them, they imperceptibly assume a new expression, and we find that our picture must be begun over again. But this difficulty does not alter the fact that there is and ever must be an element of authority in all true religion, and in none more explicitly so than in Christianity.

To begin with, the Incarnation is emphatically presented to us in the New Testament as an advent; no mere event in the ordinary line of human evolution, but the coming of One from a transcendent sphere. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world." "The Word was made flesh." "Who being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant."

And with this accords the contrast between the teaching of Christ and other men. "He spake as one having authority and not as the scribes." "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time . . . but I say." "A new commandment I give unto you." "Come unto me." "Take my yoke upon you and learn of

me." "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." The language is human, but the implied attitude is that of One who confronts mankind with an authority which is other than that of men, and which He wills to be accepted as such.

Moreover, what He once did, Christ has continued and still continues to do, according to the Christian belief, through His Church. "Go ye and teach all nations" are the words of its commission, and again, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me." And so the Church, as an institution, has stood and stands in a sense over against the world, confronting it with an authority that is difficult to define, but easy to recognize, as transcendent, coming from above, before it can grow immanent, realized within. The Church meets each fresh individual with a message, a ministry, a literature, and sacraments. And this is as true of the baptized child as of the unconverted heathen. He may early have been taken into Christian arms and received into the Christian society. But as he grows up he finds

that society, in a very real sense, outside him, and around him; teaching, insisting, appealing to him through a number of external agencies, to enter upon his inheritance, and make the Christian life his own. And if he listens to this appeal and gives his mind to the subject he will naturally ask questions that need to be answered. Whereupon he is again confronted by a number of evidences from without; such as the practical universality of religion in the race, the various arguments in its favour, the strangely prophetic history of the Jewish people, culminating in the appearance and character of Jesus Christ, the foundation and history of the Christian Church, the New Testament, the sacraments, the lives of the saints. These various facts, with their Christian interpretation, are presented to him, by the society, which claims an authoritative mission so to present them. Concomitantly with this process, his own inner and personal religious experience may be growing. But it will, usually, grow out of and be conditioned by all this suggestion from without. And, however independent of external influence, or critical of its details he may become in the end, he could never have attained that end without its operation.

Moreover, we must remember that from the very nature of the case, this process must of necessity, if the Christian life is to continue, be repeated in every successive generation ; since we all enter the world as children, asking questions, and dependent upon others for their answer. While, further, the majority of mankind have neither the time, the capacity, nor the opportunity, to study religious questions at first hand for themselves, and must therefore remain as dependent upon authority as the child. This need not prevent them from gaining real religious experience ; but it will supervene, as with the child, upon suggestion from without. Of course no personal religion that is real will long continue to rest solely on external authority. An element of experience will soon begin to blend with the acceptance of authority, and that element will gradually increase. While the attainment of a maximum of inner personal experience is the natural goal of all religious endeavour,—such experience as will enable us to say "I know whom I have believed,"—the experience which true mysticism seeks. But it would probably be fair to say that the majority of those who, in any generation, might be called sincerely religious

people, fall far short of this possible maximum, and live largely in reliance on authority. And we have seen that from the nature of human life it must be so. The element of authority in religion must always be strong.

But there is a great deal more to be said upon the question than this. For authority is not merely a compendious means for conveying knowledge to those who have no time or power to gain it in other ways. It stands for a substantive fact; it symbolizes a great reality; it is the witness to an important truth;—the truth of what in technical language we call the divine transcendence.

There is a natural objection in many minds to the employment of abstract, metaphysical expressions when speaking about religion. But their use enables us to isolate particular points for consideration, and so to clear our thoughts, which the infinite complexity of real existence would otherwise but hopelessly confuse. Even the physical sciences which deal with the most concrete forms of experience would be powerless without the use of abstraction, and the consequent generalizations which abstraction enables us to make.

When, then, we contrast the transcendence, or surpassing nature, with the immanence or indwelling presence of God we are only describing, in our very inadequate human language, two aspects of one and the self-same Being. But they are very different aspects, and it is of the utmost importance that in our thoughts about religion both should be kept in view.

Metaphysically speaking, then, God is the absolute, transcendent Being, who makes finite and relative existence possible; and all those mental categories, or forms of thought, like "cause" and "substance" by which we give comparative stability to what would otherwise be merely the fleeting phenomena of sense, do but symbolize the fact that all the chance and change of things which is for ever going on around us, has its root in a permanent Being, or as the Germans would say world-ground, that abides and is the source of all reality. We do not postulate this idea because our feelings need it. On the contrary its necessity is involved, as all idealists from the days of Plato and Aristotle have constantly maintained, in all our thoughts.

We shall return to enlarge upon this point in a subsequent chapter; but to prevent confusion

it may be well here to state in what sense we use the phrase "Absolute Being," particularly as some of our modern pragmatists scoff at its use altogether, while other thinkers criticize adversely this particular use.

"Absolute" means unrelated to anything outside itself. It may include internal relations, but precludes all external ones. Some thinkers construe this to mean, independent of all relations of any kind whatsoever, to anything outside itself. Therefore, say they, the Absolute is a term that can only be applied to the totality of all existence, that is to the world-ground together with the world, or in theological language God together with creation. But if the Absolute is to be understood in this sense, it becomes a practically meaningless thing. For we can attach no common predicate, beyond that of bare existence, to such an absolute. We can make no profitable statement about God and the universe viewed together as one whole. And accordingly this conception of the Absolute has led men into extraordinary intellectual difficulties.

But the term "Absolute" may also be used, and is used by Christian theologians, to imply "independent of all necessary or compulsory re-

lations," "independent," that is, of all compulsion or determination by another, or in other words completely self-dependent and self-determined. It is in this sense that we apply the word to God. And His absoluteness, so conceived, is not affected by His relation to creation since that is not a necessary relation, but one contingent on His own self-determination—His own will to create. A free man may voluntarily limit his practical freedom, by adopting a profession or a rule of life, but such voluntary self-restraint does not diminish, but rather emphasizes his essential freedom. And so we conceive God's absoluteness to be perfectly compatible with His relation to His creatures, precisely because they are His creatures, or in other words, the result of His own free will. In fact our chief need of the term "Absolute" is to protect the doctrine of the divine freedom. "Of His own will begat He us." It is in this sense then that we speak of God as the absolute Being.

Now the theological bearing of this absoluteness is that God is the perfect Being, the Almighty, the Omniscient, the Good, who sustains all finite beings in existence, or in other words imparts to them all the reality that

they possess, while transcending them as immeasurably as the Creator ever must transcend the creature. He is our infinite and absolute Other. He is all that we are not. And for this very reason He is the Object of all our hope and desire. "All men yearn for the gods, as young birds open their mouths for food," says the Greek poet. "My soul is athirst for God," says the Hebrew Psalmist. "We are restless, O God, till we rest in Thee," adds the Roman philosopher. The Psalter is a prayer book that has not yet grown obsolete; and the psalter is full of this thought, of the dependence of the creature on his Creator.

"Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; . . . O give me understanding that I may live." "Be thou my stronghold, whereunto I may alway resort . . . for thou art my house of defence, and my castle." "The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing." "The Lord is my light, and my salvation." "The Lord is the strength of my life." "Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

Such language may not express the whole of religion, as a Christian conceives it; but it does

express its essentially fundamental and permanent basis; except upon which no further superstructure could be raised. It does not express an earlier conception of God, to be superseded in time by a later; but the very first and foremost feature of what we mean by God at all. For when we pass on, as Christians, to the further thought of God's indwelling presence or immanence within us, and of Christ's being formed within us, and of our bodies becoming temples of the Holy Ghost, the whole significance of this depends upon the fact that God is our eternal Other, and not our self. "It is one thing to be God," says St. Augustine, "and another to be partaker of God," and the essential character of this antithesis cannot be better or more emphatically expressed than in the well-known words of St. Thomas—"We come as sick to the physician of Life, unclean to the fountain of mercy, blind to the light of eternal brightness, poor and needy to the Lord of all things . . . that we may receive the bread of angels, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, with a humble, lowly, and contrite heart." In other words, the Christian conception of the divine immanence in man is the extreme

opposite of the Vedantic identification of the inmost self with God. Man at the centre of his being is not God, but is capable of receiving God (*capax deitatis*), while, as the result of that reception, his own individuality, his own "peculiar difference" is not pantheistically obliterated, but divinely intensified. Thus the divine immanence in man, as conceived by Christians, depends, for its very character and value, upon the divine transcendence; upon the thought that the same God who "hath respect unto the lowly," is still "the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity; whose name is Holy."

This, then, is the great truth which lies behind the authoritative element in the Christian religion. That authority is a permanent reminder of the absolute sovereignty of God, in its twofold aspect, as involving the unqualified right to command us, and the unlimited power to protect us. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why didst Thou make me thus?" and again, "neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth nor any other creature, shall be able to

separate us from the love of God." And this twofold thought is at once the source of our religious awe and our religious peace. Our Creator and Ruler and Judge is God Almighty; but our Father, Saviour, Sanctifier, is the same Almighty God.

The truth, then, that authority symbolizes being of this permanently important character, its symbol must needs be important too. And here arises our modern difficulty. For all the old forms of authority seem at least to have been shaken by criticism; because in all we have come to recognize, with increasing clearness, the element of human fallibility and consequent error. And we have to sift this criticism, with a view to discover the extent to which our old forms of thought are inadequate; and, in that case, how their inner reality may best be preserved. For example, the demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God was convincing enough to men who were perfectly satisfied with syllogistic deduction from self-evident premises. But both the self-evidence of these premises, and the sufficiency of the syllogism have ceased to be obvious to us; and the authority of reason in religion has, in consequence, lost its old simplicity

of application. Again a Church whose general councils were held to be infallible, and whose dogmas were viewed as adequate expressions of divinely revealed truth, represented authority in a definite and tangible shape. But our modern recognition of the necessarily human and limited characters of the men, who sat in councils, as well as of the language that they used, has rendered our appreciation of their authority more critical and complex than of old. While once again an infallible Bible, verbally inspired, was a positive source of authority to those who so received it. But with our fuller realization of the human element in the Bible, the precise form of its authority has changed; we can no longer settle our difficulties by the mere quotation of a text. Other instances might be cited with the same effect, but these will be sufficient to illustrate our point.

Now in all these cases the authority symbolized a reality. It represented God's sovereignty over man. But the form of its expression was temporary, and in some cases, as we now think, mistaken. Yet the reality remains, as great for us as for the men of old. God has the same sovereign relation to us as to them. And

reason, and the Bible, and the Church still witness to the fact. Only the precise mode of their witness has for us somewhat changed its character; and in so doing become harder to define. But we cannot, because this is the case, accept the suggestion which is now often made, that we should fall back upon mere feeling or personal inner experience as the sole basis for our religion. Reason and the Bible and the Church are as important to us as ever, as authoritative as ever; and are not essentially affected by the fact that the precise nature and conditions of their authority present to us more complex problems than they did to a previous generation.

CHAPTER II

RELATIVE AND ABSOLUTE BEING

We have spoken of the conception of absolute Being as dating in Western philosophy from Plato. For though he had his predecessors they are only known to us in fragments, and chiefly through their influence upon himself. It may be well, therefore, to refer briefly to what Plato taught. For to us he is practically the father of philosophy, the great idealist of all time; whose thoughts, however variously interpreted along the ages, have never lost their magic charm, and are still a power in the world to-day.

Plato then speaks of the absolute Being as "the good" or "the idea of good"; ideas in his language meaning not intellectual abstractions, but transcendent realities which are the heavenly "patterns" of all earthly things. And the neuter form of his expression must not be taken to imply impersonality, any more than when we

say "the deity." For he elsewhere speaks of "God" and of "the very and eternal mind."

"As the sun," he says, "is not only the author of visibility in all visible things, but of generation and nourishment and growth . . . in like manner the Good may be said to be not only the author of knowledge in all things known, but of their being and essence, and yet the Good is not essence, but far exceeds essence in dignity and power." And again, "That which imparts truth to the object and knowledge to the subject is what I would have you term the Idea of good, and that you will regard as the cause of science, and of truth as known by us; beautiful, too, as are both truth and knowledge, you will be right in regarding this other nature as more beautiful than either."[1]

"Can we ever be made to believe that motion and life and soul and mind are not present with absolute being? Can we imagine being to be devoid of life and mind, and to remain in awful unmeaningness, an everlasting fixture? That would be a terrible admission."[2] And again, "The creator of the world was good . . . and being free from jealousy he desired that all things

[1] *Repub.* 508, 509. [2] *Sophist*, 249.

should be as like himself as possible . . . God desired that all things should be good, and nothing bad as far as this could be accomplished. . . . Such was the scheme of the eternal God."[1]

But the knowledge of the good is not easy of acquisition.

"My opinion is that in the world of knowledge, the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and when seen is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful, and right, parent of light and the Lord of light in this world, and the source of truth and reason in the other . . . the first great cause which he who would act rationally must behold."[2]

Our capacity for this knowledge arises from our own kinship with the divine, and its condition is moral purification. Thus:

"Concerning the highest part of the human soul, we should consider that God gave this as a spirit (δαίμονα) which was to dwell at the summit of the body, and to raise us as plants not of an earthly but a heavenly growth, from earth to our kindred which is in heaven. And this is most true; for the divine power suspended the head

[1] *Timaeus*, 30, 34. [2] *Rep.* 517.

and root of us from that place where the generation of the soul first began. . . . He therefore who is always occupied with the cravings of desire and ambition . . . must have all his opinions mortal, and as far as man can he must be all of him mortal;—But he who has been earnest in the love of knowledge and true wisdom . . . must of necessity, as far as human nature is capable of attaining immortality, be all immortal, as he is ever serving the divine power. . . . And the notions which are akin to the divine principle within us are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe. These every man should follow . . . and by learning the harmonies and revolutions of the whole, should assimilate the perceiver to the thing perceived, according to his original nature, and by thus assimilating them, attain that final perfection of life, which the gods set before mankind as best, both for the present and the future."[1]

And again, "The most divine part of the soul is that which deals with knowledge and wisdom. . . . This then resembles the divine principle. And the man who contemplates this and so learns

[1] *Timaeus*, 90.

to know the whole divine principle, would thus also come best to know himself."[1] "By acting justly and temperately you will act as is pleasing to God . . . and you will so act by contemplating the divine light."[2] "We ought to fly heavenward, and to fly thither is to become like God as far as possible; holy and just and wise." For "In God is no unrighteousness at all—he is altogether righteous; and there is nothing more like him than he of us who is the most righteous."[3]

But this involves a process of entire conversion from all ignoble aims and interests.

"As the eye cannot turn from darkness to light without the whole body, so too when the eye of the soul is turned round, the whole soul must be turned from the world of generation to that of being, and become able to endure the sight of being, and of the brightest and best of being—that is to say, of the good. . . . And this is conversion . . . not implanting eyes for they exist already, but giving them a right direction, which they have not."[4]

It is thus not merely with our intellect, but

[1] *Alcibiades*, i. 133. [2] *Ib.* 134.
[3] *Theaetetus*, 176. [4] *Repub.* 518.

with our whole being, when spiritually purified, that we may recognize the good or God. And of the process by which we do so he says:

"When I, or any one, look at an object and perceive that the object aims at being another thing, but falls short of it and cannot attain to it —he who makes this observation must have had a previous knowledge of that to which, as he says, the other though similar was inferior."[1] "Therefore before we began to see or hear or perceive in any way, we must have had a knowledge of absolute equality, or we could not have referred to that the equals which are derived from the senses—for to that they all aspire and of that they fall short." . . . And so with "all other ideas; for we are not speaking only of equality absolute—but of beauty, good, justice, holiness, and all which we stamp with the name of absolute being."[2]

Thus we imply our consciousness of perfect Being, in our judgment that earthly things fall short of it. And our soul must rise from the one to the other by using the objects of sense and the hypotheses of science as "steps and points of departure into a region which is far

[1] *Phaedo*, 74. [2] *Ib.* 75.

above hypothesis, in order that she may soar beyond them into the first principle of the whole."[1] Thus the true way of love "is to use the beauties of earth as steps along which one mounts upwards, for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair actions, and from fair actions to fair notions, until from fair notions, he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of true beauty is."[2]

"This is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute . . . in that communion only . . . he will be enabled . . . to become the friend of God, and be immortal if mortal man may."[3]

It is, of course, impossible to do justice to an artist like Plato by any bare quotation of extracts; but these passages may suffice to show his general view of the question before us:—

First: that God is the absolute Being on whom all else depends.

Secondly: that we know Him through an element within us that is akin to Himself.

Thirdly: that this element of our soul needs

[1] *Repub.* 511. [2] *Sympos.* 211. [3] *Ib.* 212.

moral purification; since only the godly can know God.

Fourthly: that we thus find the perfect implied in the knowledge of the imperfect. This he sometimes calls "reminiscence" such as Wordsworth has described:

> The soul that riseth with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar;
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home.

But it is doubtful how much Plato intended, or how far he retained this particular view.

Fifthly: that the objects of sense and science have a real value "as stepping-stones and points of departure," from which we may ascend to the truth and beauty and goodness which they imperfectly manifest.

Before going further it may be well to compare the teaching of Aristotle with this.

Aristotle criticizes Plato, but in fundamental questions is substantially at one with him; and often only translates his master's poetic eloquence into dry and highly technical prose.

"The highest philosophy or theology," he

says, "deals with the being that is eternal, immutable, transcendent."[1] For "it is plain that there must be some one and eternal being which is the originator of all movement."[2] "Something which while itself changeless is the source of all change, an eternal and essential energy." "On such a first principle heaven and all nature depend." "Therefore we describe God as an eternal, perfect, living being; so that continuous and eternal life pertains to him, or rather he is that life."[3] "The energy of God is immortality, and this is eternal life."[4] "And since God contains all good, and is independent he will be occupied in contemplation; for this is the highest mode of life; and since there can be nothing better than himself he will contemplate himself."[5] Thus "He thinks himself (as his own object) and his thought is thought of thought."[6] "So that the energy of God, while excelling in blessedness will be contemplative."[7]

On the relation of God, thus conceived, to the world, he gives two somewhat different, but not necessarily irreconcilable views.

The first principle "moves all things by its

[1] *Met.* v. 1. [2] *Phys.* viii. 6. [3] *Met.* xii. 7.
[4] *De Caelo*, ii. 3. [5] *Mag. Mor.* ii. 15.
[6] *Met.* xii. 9. [7] *Nic. Eth.* x. 8.

attraction . . . like the objects of desire or thought, which are ultimately the same, namely the real good; that which does not merely seem good because we desire it, but is desired because seen to be good."[1]

But again, "If we ask how does the nature of the universe contain the good, whether as something existing independently apart, or as its own orderly arrangement, we answer in both ways; like an army whose excellence consists both in its organization and in its general, but more especially in the latter; for the general does not result from the organization, but the organization from the general."[2]

From this conception of God follows the rationality of the world. "God and nature do nothing aimlessly."[3] "Nature always does the best thing that is practically possible."[4] And nature rises through successive stages towards God—a thought which both Dante and Milton have embodied in passages that are purely Aristotelian:

> All things, whate'er they be,
> Have order among themselves, and this is form,
> That makes the universe resemble God,
> . . . . . .

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[1] *Met.* xii. 7. [2] *Ib.* 10.
[3] *De Caelo*, i. 4. [4] *Ib.* ii. 5.

In the order that I speak of are inclined
All natures by their destiny diverse
More or less near unto their origin.[1]

And again Milton:

One Almighty is, from whom
All things proceed, and up to Him return,
. . . . . .
Endued with various form, various degrees
Of substance, and in things that live, of life;
But more refined, more spirituous, and pure,
As nearer to him placed, or nearer tending,
Each in their several active spheres assigned,
Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
Proportioned to each kind. So from the root
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
More airy, last the bright consummate flower
Spirits odorous breathes; flowers and their fruits,
Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed,
To vital spirits aspire, to animal,
To intellectual; give both life and sense
Fancy and understanding; whence the soul
Reason receives, and reason is her being.[2]

At the crown of this ascent stands man. "Man is the only animal that stands upright . . . because his nature and essence is divine; and the function of what is divine is wisdom and understanding."[3] He has a passive mind, which receives the impressions of sense, but also an active reason which is "separable"[4] and

[1] Dante, *Par.* i. 102 *et seq.*
[2] *Par. Lost*, v. 469.
[3] *Part. Animal.* iv. 10.
[4] *De An.* iii. 5.

comes into him from without and is alone divine.[1]

And the highest life for man is "not to confine himself to mortal things, but as far as possible to immortalize himself," by imitating the divine life of contemplation, "in virtue of that divine element that is within him."[2]

Aristotle, it will be noticed, is more coldly intellectual than Plato; but they are fundamentally at one. And Augustine, in speaking of them, says: "The ablest critics teach us that, despite of the differences which strike careless readers, Aristotle and Plato agree in their reasoning; so that as the result of much time and discussion, one method of most true philosophy has, in my judgment, been evolved."[3] Like all great philosophers they have been variously interpreted or developed, the Neoplatonic mysticism and the Arabic pantheism, for instance, being among their historical results. But the form in which they have, as a fact, been most widely influential has been the Christian development which they received from the Fathers and Schoolmen. Plato weighed most with the Fathers, and especially Augustine, during the period when

[1] *Gen. An.* ii. 3. [2] *Eth.* x. 7. [3] *Contr. Acad.* iii. c. 19, 42.

Christian theology was being formed; and Aristotle with the Schoolmen when it was being systematized and arranged.

To return then to Plato: we find him teaching that God or the absolute Good is not to be apprehended by the mere intellect, but by the whole man, the converted soul that has been brought out of the dark cave into the true light. Nor is it possible to convey by a single quotation the emphasis with which he insists upon this point. For it is the burden of long dialogue after dialogue. It is the reason of the importance that he attaches to education and to law; they are to purify and train the soul. For the philosopher is a lover; philosophy is the practice of dying, or the preparation for death (*μελέτη θανάτου*). The senses are to be suspected, not so much for their intellectual inadequacy as for their moral seductiveness; because they drag down the soul. While the chief value of science is declared to be not intellectual satisfaction but advancement towards the knowledge of God.

Now when religious teachers maintain, as all religious teachers consistently do, that knowledge of God, as distinct from speculation about Him, can only be reached through the gateway of

moral purification, they are apt to be charged with obscurantism. It is noteworthy, therefore, that Plato, a Greek of the Greeks, a philosopher, freely critical of his country's religion, and biased by no trammels of priestly tradition, makes, with all possible emphasis, the same assertion.

And though Aristotle is less explicit upon the point—Aristotle, who, as Shakespeare reminds us, thought young men, on account of their "hot passion of distemper'd blood,"

> Unfit to hear moral philosophy—[1]

yet the whole drift of his ethical teaching is to the like effect.

Here, then, we have the verdict of what is wont to be called the natural or unassisted human reason, if indeed that phrase has any meaning—the verdict of Augustine's "one method of most true philosophy"; and it fully supports the Christian belief that he and he only that "willeth to do shall know of the doctrine."

Before enlarging upon this point it may be well to revert to Plato's view of the way in which we obtain our first conception of absolute Being; which is preliminary to that further knowledge of which we have been speaking. We find the con-

[1] *Troilus and Cressida*, Act ii. Scene 2.

ception involved, he says, as we saw above, in our judgment of relative and finite things as such. In judging things to be relative and finite, we are judging them by tacit reference to an absolute standard; in calling them imperfectly beautiful, or good, we presuppose that there is a perfect beauty and goodness, which they only partially reveal. And Aristotle argues in colder language to the same effect; that a world of rationally ordered change, or as we should say development, implies as its condition an absolute reason which itself transcends and is beyond all change. A universe, he saw, could not develop itself in the air, as some modern writers appear to think. It must be sustained in the process by a Being who is, in his language, "wholly actual"; that is, above and beyond all development—Himself "unmoved, all motion's source."

Augustine, a thorough Platonist, reproduces Plato's form of the argument:

"Examining whence it was that I admired the beauty of bodies celestial or terrestrial; and what aided me in judging soundly on things mutable, and pronouncing 'This ought to be thus, this not'; examining I say whence it was that I so judged, seeing I did so judge, I had found the

unchangeable and true eternity of truth above my changeable mind. . . . My reason . . . without any doubting proclaimed 'that the unchangeable was to be preferred to the changeable'; whence also it knew that unchangeable, which unless it had in some way known, it had no sure ground to prefer it to the changeable. And thus with the flash of one trembling glance it arrived at That which Is."[1]

And at a later date, Aquinas revived the Aristotelian reasoning.

Now the first point of this argument is that we do not derive our notion of absolute or infinite Being, as a mere conception, from the indefinite amplification of what is relative and finite, and then attempt to prove that a reality corresponding to this conception exists. This is the usual empirical account of the matter, and it is against this view only that Kant's pleasantry holds good, that the thought of a hundred dollars does not prove their existence in our pocket. On the contrary our argument maintains that in thinking of relative and final things we presuppose, not merely the conception but the actual existence of an absolute and infinite Being, as necessary to

[1] Aug. *Conf.* vii. 23.

account for, and therefore partially revealed in, all lesser existence.

In other words we do not start with a mere conception of God, but with what may practically be called a perception of Him; as being involved in all our experience, and in the very possibility of that experience.

Take ordinary scientific experience, for instance. It has a metaphysical implication, of which its students are, for the most part, unaware, for the simple reason that it is no concern of theirs to be metaphysical any more than it is to be musical; they must specialize themselves for scientific success. But science, incidentally, proves the truth and validity of reason; for it learns to understand the world, and proves the correctness of its understanding by making predictions that are subsequently verified and inventions that actually work. And this further proves that the world is intelligible and so capable of being understood; that it is orderly and not chaotic; a house and not a heap of bricks, a book and not a pile of letters. The scientific man does not pause to assert this. He assumes it, takes it for granted, at his every step; and the assumption is invariably justified. But the same

reason which leads us so far leads us inevitably further, to the conclusion that an intelligible or rationally ordered universe must be the work of mind; and that in the process of understanding it we come in contact with this mind; as we do with that of an artist in studying his picture or an author in reading his book. There is then, as a fact of our experience, mind or reason in the world-ground.

But this conviction necessitates a further step. For mind or reason in the only form in which we know it is an attribute of persons, self-conscious beings who can also love and will. To speak of impersonal reason, or unconscious purpose like Hartmann, or unconscious will like Schopenhauer, is to use sonorous language that means literally nothing. For such terms are merely abstractions from personality with its most essential elements omitted. We must therefore either decline to discuss the subject, or follow the only analogy that we possess, and conclude that the mind or reason in question is personal. He must, of course, infinitely transcend personality as we know it, but He must include it in His greater being; analogously, perhaps, to the way in which animal life transcends yet includes chemical activity; while

human personality again transcends and includes animal life. And though it may be said that this divine personality, however probable, is only an inference, we must remember that it is an inference from a fact of actual experience, namely the presence of reason in the world.

This would be a modern way of stating the case; but it is in the last analysis identical with the argument of Plato and Aristotle, and of all the great idealists from them to the present day. Various proofs, as they have often been miscalled —for they are not proofs in the sense of demonstrations—various proofs of Theism have been classified and catalogued and named; but they all have their root in this fundamental position that a world of relative and finite things exists as a fact, and yet, being relative and finite, cannot account for or explain itself; and therefore implies by its very existence the further existence of a Being that is neither relative nor finite; an absolute and infinite Being. Moreover, though thus capable of intellectual expression, this argument is not merely a judgment of our intellect but of our whole personality—reason, feeling, conscience, will; and therein lies its strength. As persons we can recognize other persons; and

we recognize, beyond the relative, an absolute Person.

Descartes, who handed the argument on, with intense conviction of its validity, from mediaeval to modern philosophy, expressed its purely intellectual aspect in a way that is open to criticism —leading to the gibe of Kant that we have quoted above. But it should be remembered that he also puts this more concrete and personal aspect of the case with force, as follows:

"From the very fact that God created me, it is highly likely that I am in some way created in His image and likeness; and that that likeness, wherein the idea of God is contained, is perceived by me, through the same faculty, wherewith I perceive myself. That is to say, when I turn my mind's eye upon myself, I not only know that I am an incomplete, dependent being, which aspires unceasingly towards something greater or better than itself; but I know also at the same time, that the being whereon I depend possesses in itself all the perfections to which I aspire, and that not indefinitely only or potentially, but actually and infinitely; and therefore that this being is God."[1]

[1] *Médit.* i.

But this personal consciousness of God only reaches its highest degree of certitude in the experience of the saint. For the saint alone has undergone in its completeness that conversion of which Plato speaks. He alone, therefore, is qualified to enter into that personal communion with God, before which all other ways, and degrees and kinds of knowledge pale. The saints, then, are our strongest evidence that the verdict of reason has pointed true. And the saints, it should be remembered, far outnumber the philosophers. Known and unknown through the ages, they have been, without hyperbole, "a great multitude whom no man can number"; godly people of whom alone the proverb is in its highest degree true, that their consentient voice—and on the point before us they all speak with one accord—their consentient voice is the voice of God—*vox populi vox Dei.*

Let us hear in conclusion one of these, as great a philosopher as saint, who had been led, as he tells us, by the teaching of Plato to the teaching of St. Paul, and whose whole language remains instinct with transfigured Platonism.

"I entered," says Augustine, "even into my inmost self. . . . I entered and beheld with the

eye of my soul . . . above that eye of my soul, and above my mind, the Light unchangeable . . . not the common light, which all may look upon, nor any greater of the like kind . . . not such, but other, far other than this. Nor was It above my soul, as oil floats above water, or sky over-arches earth: but above my soul because It made me; and I beneath It, because I was made by It. He that knows the Truth, knows what that Light is; and he that knows It knows eternity. Love knoweth It. O Truth who art eternity! and Love who art Truth! and eternity who art Love! Thou art my God, to Thee do I sigh night and day. . . . And Thou criedst to me from afar 'Yea verily I am that I am.' And I heard as the heart heareth, and could sooner doubt my own existence than that Truth 'which is clearly seen being understood by those things which are made.'"[1]

But this assurance only came after that long agony of conversion which the Confessions of Augustine describe — conversion whose result was to purify the heart, and by doing so to clarify the mind. For:

"Reason is the sight of the soul . . . and

[1] Aug. *Conf.* vii. x. 16.

right or perfect reason is of the nature of a virtue; but even this will not enable us to see the light, unless three qualities are present within us—faith to believe that the Object of our look will when seen bring blessedness; hope to assure us that if we look aright we shall see that Object; love to desire both Its sight and Its enjoyment. Then follows that very vision of God which is the end and object of our look. . . . And this is the crown of virtue, the attainment of reason's goal; whereon the life of blessedness ensues."[1]

[1] Aug. *Soliloq.* i. vi. 13.

CHAPTER III

THE THEISTIC ARGUMENTS

Before continuing our subject it may be convenient to notice one or two current objections to the conception of absolute personality. It is urged in some quarters that personality involves the distinction of a self from a not-self, or ego from non-ego, and is therefore essentially finite and relative — relative to the not-self, without which it could not exist; and consequently that an absolute Person is an impossible conception. But this criticism has been answered again and again to the effect that self and not-self are in no sense correlative or co-ordinate terms. My consciousness of myself is a perfectly positive thing; whereas the not-self, considered simply as such, is a mere negation. I am conscious of myself as a self-conscious being, one, that is, who can reflect upon myself, and my own internal state, my thoughts, feelings, purposes, or, in

other words, as a subject who can make myself my own object. And the essence of my personality consists, not in my distinction from the rest of the world, but in my self-consciousness and all that it involves. It is obvious that as a relative and finite being I am dependent upon other persons and things. But why and in what way dependent? Not simply because they are not myself—a mere negation—but because they are potential parts of myself; capable, that is, of being assimilated and incorporated in myself, like the food by which my body grows. And it is precisely in this process that the development of personality consists. A person learns languages, science, music; wins the love of friends; gains money, property, power, influence; and in each case makes what was once an alien not-self into a part of himself, with the result that the whole content of his personality is enlarged. He has become a richer, greater, fuller, more complex person. And in proportion as this is the case he is less constantly dependent on the not-self, for he can be occupied with his own inner experience; like Milton in his blindness composing *Paradise Lost*.

Of course under human conditions we can

only trace this process to a very limited extent. But it is sufficient to suggest, by analogy, that a complete and perfect Person would be one for whom there was no essential not-self, because all essential experience was His own; an infinite fulness or Pleroma, in the language of St. Paul. This analogy obviously would not preclude such internal relationships within the Godhead as the Christian doctrine of the Trinity involves; but rather points, indeed, when thought out, in their direction. Nor, again, would it be affected, as we have seen above, by the existence of finite creatures created by God's own freewill. It merely suggests that personality need not necessarily imply contrast with an alien not-self and therefore be to that extent always finite; but that it may be, on the contrary, wholly self-contained and therefore absolute. In which case one might say in the words of Lotze that have of late years been so often quoted, "Perfect personality is in God only; . . . the finiteness of the finite is not a producing condition of . . . personality, but a limit and hindrance of its development."

But another objection has been raised of late years against the doctrine of God's absolute-

ness, on the ground that He realizes His will, and therefore Himself, through an evolutionary process, and here on earth through the ministry of men, men who co-operate with Him to raise their fellows. Consequently, it is urged, He must be in process of realization, and as yet not fully realized; partly still potential and not wholly actual.

But, of course, this objection begs the question against God's free relation to the universe. It assumes that the universe is in some sense essential to His being. Whereas the familiar experience of our own free relation to our works may at least suggest another analogy. For a man remains, in all essentials, the same human being, whether he chooses to employ himself in external works or no. If he writes poems, paints pictures, invents machines, he will by so doing manifest, and in that sense realize, his innate capacities; but he will not add a cubit to his stature, or otherwise alter his essential personality. If he had chosen to remain a "mute inglorious Milton" and do nothing, he would have been a less useful, and a less moral man, but still equally a man, with all the constituents of human personality. And so if

God's relation to the universe is free, if He creates and sustains its development of His own freewill, He does, of course, in so doing manifest Himself, and realize Himself in a new region; but not in a way to affect His divine personality, or absolute Being, as such. In other words we might say that His purpose is increasingly realized, but not His person. This is only a human analogy, and cannot be pressed too far, but it is an analogy based on something that we know, whereas the pantheistic alternative, which it is designed to meet, has no such basis in known fact; it is an imaginary hypothesis that cannot really be thought out.

These objections, therefore, fail to maintain themselves when analysed. At the same time, as we said above, the conception of absolute personality cannot be developed without leading in the direction of some such doctrine as that of the Christian Trinity in Unity. As we have frequently enlarged on this point elsewhere, we need not now do more than state the fact. Sociality is certainly of the very essence of personality as we know it, though limitation is not. Absolute personality would therefore involve absolute sociality; which is precisely what

the doctrine of the Trinity implies. And it is because Christians hold this doctrine, as the result of human thought playing upon what they believe to be a basis of revelation, that they can the more securely think and speak of God as possessing absolute personality.

To return: we saw in our last chapter how Plato and Aristotle taught that the reality of an absolute Being is involved in all our knowledge of relative and finite Being. And this doctrine has been maintained by all the great idealists, too numerous to name, that have handed on the torch of philosophy from Plato to the present day. It has been differently expressed in different ages, but these differences of expression, relative as they naturally were to the varying categories of their day, do not alter the fundamental identity of the thoughts that underlie them. And though the position is attacked in the present day from the agnostic or empirical point of view, there is no essential novelty in this attack, whatever new name it may assume. It is the same criticism which idealists in every age have had to meet, and in meeting which they have only intensified their central conviction.[1]

[1] See Note A.

Moreover, we saw that this doctrine runs up into and is confirmed by the highest religious experience. We might put this otherwise, and perhaps more accurately, by saying that it is an abstraction from, or an abstract portion of that religious experience. For religion is of course older, far older and more universal than philosophy, and the religious conception of God is proportionately older and commoner than the philosophic. Indeed, it is interesting to note that many modern psychologists are disposed to trace the historic origin of our religious consciousness back into the region of instinctive feeling or emotion; and this not with the effect of reducing it to a thing of merely subjective value, but rather as emphasizing its fundamental place in our original constitution and make. There are analogies for this. The mutual attraction of the sexes, and the maternal instinct, for example, are among the most elementary and fundamental attributes of our race. And they are both, in their obvious aspect, purely emotional—irrational instincts as they are sometimes called. Yet they work teleologically for the production and protection of offspring, and thus for the maintenance of mankind. In other words, they

accomplish the most far-reaching results of reason and compel us to believe that they were implanted for that end. And so, if we trace religion to an instinctive origin, we do not thereby diminish but increase its authority; as springing from a region that lies deeper than ghostly fears, or mythic fancies, or selfish interests of priestcraft—the region of which we can only say, "It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves." "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and we are restless till we find rest in Thee." But, whatever the history of its development, religion once developed rests ultimately on the experience of really religious people. Others may accept it on their authority; but its whole vitality and power in the world is due to those for whom it has become a matter of real experience. And what is this experience? It is that of personal communion with a transcendent Person, who appeals to our conscience, our affections, our intellect, our will—to all the faculties of our complex being. It is summed up for all time in the language of the Psalmist:

O Lord, Thou hast searched me out, and known me: Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising; Thou understandest my thoughts long before.

Thou art about my path, and about my bed: and spiest out all my ways.

For lo, there is not a word in my tongue: but Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.

Thou hast fashioned me behind and before: and laid Thine hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me: I cannot attain unto it.

Whither shall I go then from Thy Spirit: or whither shall I go then from Thy Presence?

If I climb up into heaven, Thou art there: if I go down to hell, Thou art there also.

If I take the wings of the morning: and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there, also, shall Thy Hand lead me: and Thy Right Hand shall hold me.

If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me: then shall my night be turned to day.

Yea, the darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the light is as clear as the day: the darkness and light to Thee are both alike.

. . . . . .

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect: and in Thy book were all my members written;

Which day by day were fashioned: when as yet there was none of them.

How dear are Thy counsels unto me, O God: O how great is the sum of them!

If I tell them, they are more in number than the sand: when I wake up I am present with Thee.

The stages by which the possibility of this experience is reached, whether in the history of the individual or the race—Plato's steps and points of departure,—no longer concern us when their work is done. They are the ushers that

have introduced us to the presence-chamber; and once there, the Presence speaks for itself. We are conscious of relation to a Person, in His unity and wholeness, on whom we depend, and towards whom we aspire; and are aware, in the same indivisible act, of our finitude and His infinity, of our own relativity and His absolute transcendence. And it is upon this experience, attested by its countless experts through the ages, that our conviction of God's reality ultimately rests.

And this personal experience of our whole being, it must be remembered, is more real and concrete than any merely intellectual judgment. We might compare it to existence in three dimensions, as contrasted with existence only in one; a solid, that is, as contrasted with a line. For besides intellectual apprehension it involves love, of the kind which is no mere passive emotion, but the active love that issues in self-sacrifice and moral purification, with the intuitive insight that purity brings—the love that issues in the life of prayer. And further, it involves a correspondence of the will with God's will, an active endeavour to carry out His will, rather than our own, in all practical relations with the world;

a life spent, that is, in the service of God. And it is in proportion as a person thus realizes or puts reality into all his relations with God, that he grows increasingly aware of the divine reality, which meets his love, answers his prayer, strengthens his will, and assures his intellect.

But *credo ut intelligam* is the law of our intellect; as thinking beings we must reflect upon the nature of our experience. And so, as we break up the white light with a prism into its component rays, we decompose our primary perception of God into various partial conceptions, to express, however inadequately, different attributes and aspects of His Being.

And thus we reach the different abstractions with which philosophy deals, and out of which the various arguments in favour of Theism are constructed. Kant's criticism of these arguments is still often quoted against them. It should be remembered, therefore, that this criticism largely turns upon his own peculiar distinction between phenomena and noumena, or appearances and things-in-themselves; which distinction we now regard as utterly untenable. Still, it is urged, such abstract arguments do not prove the God of our religious consciousness; and

this is perfectly true, for the simple reason that they are abstract; they deal only with isolated aspects of a complex living Being. Moreover, they have a different value for the convinced Theist—the man of such experience as we have above described—and for the man who has no such personal conviction. For the former sees in them the partial analyses of a creed which he already holds in its synthetic unity and completeness; and which he knows to be incapable, under our present limitations, of adequate intellectual expression. He can use them, therefore, without offence at their logical incompleteness, to illuminate and corroborate his faith. Whereas the latter, the man without any Theistic conviction, taking the arguments in question at their bare logical value, and, as a rule, ignoring the cumulative effect of their convergence, is so preoccupied with their inadequacy as proofs, and with their distance, in any case, from the religious conception of God, that he usually underestimates the probability which they suggest.

The Theistic arguments have thus two different aspects, which may recall Plato's description of the double procedure, by which we rise from

hypotheses or probabilities till we reach that first principle which is no longer hypothetical; and when once secure in the possession of this, can deduce our old probabilities from it as new certainties. Thus the Theist is already in possession of the first principle which is no longer merely hypothetical. He has reached the divine personality in its wholeness, with his own personality in its wholeness; and can then analyse its aspects intellectually, in virtue of his own correspondence with it; by picturing his own powers with all their limitations removed. This is the scholastic *via eminentiae*, or modern method of infinitation, and gives us not merely negative, but positive and definite conceptions of the Divine. Thus we possess in our own will a positive instance, and the only positive instance that we know, of causation, not in Hume's sense of a mere antecedent or secondary cause, but as a definite power that can originate. We are, in our measure, creators; we can initiate action, form characters, frame policies, paint pictures, carve statues, write poems, invent machines. But we are limited in all this by our material, our capacity, our opportunity, and all the incidents of our finite nature. These, however, are only hindrances to the free opera-

tion of our will and have nothing to do with its essence. We can consequently think them away, and so reach a perfectly positive conception of an absolute will, which, as such, is the first cause.

For the first cause is not, of course, as is sometimes absurdly supposed, the earliest of an infinite series of antecedents, like the tortoise whereon the world-bearing elephant rests, but a power which differs in kind from all its effects, and is not only, to speak in temporal language, the past creator, but also the present sustainer of that continuous process of events which constitutes the life of the world. And when, for intellectual convenience, we separate any antecedent and consequent parts of this process into causes and effects, we are only using the term "cause" in a secondary sense, which must not be confused with the fact of primary causation. The former only transmits, while the latter originates energy.

Again, when we consider the human will as a cause, it is not a power that initiates blindly. It is rational and acts for a purpose or end, which is the final cause, the sufficient reason of its action. And the presence of a sufficient reason satisfies our intellect. It constitutes an adequate explanation behind which we have no further need to go. If

I wish to understand a man's character, no mere survey of his successive actions is sufficient; I must discover the motives which actuated him, the purpose which he had in view. And so in reading history we are not content with the bare record of past events, but endeavour to discern the motives of its various agents. And where we cannot discover this ultimate purpose, or final cause, as in the case of natural phenomena, we recognize that our knowledge, however scientific, is incomplete. For the ultimate demand of reason remains unsatisfied; the demand to know not only how, but why things happen as they do.

The Absolute First Cause then, whom Theists apprehend as personal, is also the Absolute Final Cause, as Aristotle saw must be the case; not only the cause but the reason of all things. This, again, is a perfectly positive conception, founded on what we know of ourselves; though, of course, wholly beyond our limited knowledge to comprehend. But though the final cause of the universe lies beyond our comprehension, we can study the small fragment of it that lies within our ken. And a rational cause must be rational throughout. We should expect, therefore, to find traces of purpose in ourselves and the world

around us, as we can see purpose in the parts of a machine of whose total function we are ignorant. And this is precisely what the Theist finds both in himself, in history, and in the natural world.

To consider first the natural world: there is no question that, on the surface, it suggests order, adaptation, purpose, design in a myriad forms, from the stars in their courses to the bee in its cell. And the positive weight of this suggestion is not logically affected by the fact that there are negative, or more strictly neutral, cases in which we, with our human standards of judgment, can see no purpose at all. The positive evidence of design in a seed, for instance, is not in any degree negatived by the fact that a thousand are what we should call wasted in nature, for every one that is matured. And this evidence of design in the world has, as we know, been amongst the most powerful of popular arguments for Theism in every age. But nowadays we are met by an alternative hypothesis which would explain away this superficial appearance of design; as due to the survival of those things that were accidentally fitted to their environment, amid the destruction of the innumerable unfit. This hypothesis, when extended from organic to inorganic nature, as it

must be, if it is to prove its point, labours under very serious difficulties; and may be fearlessly met, as it has been met again and again, on its intellectual merits. But we are not now concerned with these; for our present point is that the Theist, whose faith is founded on personal experience, finds amply sufficient evidence around him of that purpose in the world, which he already believes to exist. If there were no such evidence its absence would perplex him. But granting the evidence to be, as it confessedly is, on the obvious view abundant, the fact that it might possibly admit of another very hypothetical explanation is for him totally beside the mark. The facts are admitted and he holds their explanation.

And this brings us to the purpose or providential guidance of man, and his history; and first of the individual man. The religious man, who is not merely a speculative Theist, but in earnest with his religion, is conscious of two elements in his inner life; his own will, and God's guidance. His own will, weakened and perverted by various causes and in various degrees, has led him to sin, and so to complicate the whole course of his life. He never is what he can see that ideally he might

have been, had there been no need of repentance, no past to undo, no energy impaired, no opportunity wasted, no frequent relapses, no failures of faith. And to this extent the divine guidance has been resisted and hindered and obscured. His life does not present to his inner consciousness the picture of one that has been led steadily straightforward by God. Yet, like Augustine, he can trace God's presence in the very midst of his resistance, leading him slowly but still surely out of the devious paths of his own choosing, and despite of his reluctance to be led. And he learns, among other things, that prayer is heard and answered ;—answered not by any mere modification of our own subjective condition ; but also and often by the control of events which actually happen to us from without. Few probably, if any, of those who have come to lean on prayer as their source of life have any doubt whatever of this fact. It is a certainty for them which gradually grows to be the centre of all their other certainty. And this certainty is not a thing of yesterday. It is as confident in the Hebrew Psalmist as in the Christian saint. "I called unto the Lord . . . and He heard me out of His holy hill." Thus the religious man has a conviction that his life is

divinely superintended, and, as he cannot suppose himself an exception, that this is universally the case.

And in the light of our personal experience, we are more prepared to trace providence in history. Because, to begin with, that experience teaches us not to expect too much. The sin of the individual is multiplied and complicated in the race, hampering, hindering, counter-working, quenching the operation of the Divine Spirit; and rendering His perpetual presence proportionately difficult to trace. Our inability to distinguish what is primitive in human nature from what is due to degradation is an instance of this difficulty, from which much false generalization has arisen in recent years. Or again, the impossibility of clearly sifting the elements in historical characters, like that of Mahomet, or Luther, or Cromwell, for example, or in crises like the Reformation or the Revolution, would be another instance in point. "The trail of the serpent is over it all." But one fact stands out above all these uncertainties; that is the advent of Jesus Christ, with its long preparation in Jewish history and prophecy, its apposite occurrence "in the fulness of time" that has

so often been enlarged upon, and the subsequent work of the Christian Church in the world. Here we trace God in history, in a way that throws reflex light not only upon all the earlier religious aspirations of mankind, but also upon the evidence of design in the natural world. And in that light we can believe in a "divine event to which the whole creation moves."

And what is true of the arguments from design is true of the moral arguments for Theism. They must be viewed from within to be read aright. If we confine our attention to the external aspect of things, the struggle for existence in nature,—"nature red in tooth and claw," and the moral disorder and physical and mental sufferings of humanity, they seem difficult to reconcile with the governance of an Almighty God of love. It is only when we are convinced by personal experience of our own relation to such a God, who speaks to us in the categorical imperative of conscience, and guides us by severity as well as by reward, that we feel sure there must be another interpretation of these superficial appearances than seems at first to meet the eye. This is a point which has often, of course, been discussed at length; and we

only mention it here, as being in harmony with what we have been saying above.

To resume then: we are nowadays prepared to admit that the authority of reason is more circumscribed than men have sometimes thought to be the case. We do not expect to force Theism by intellectual arguments into unwilling ears; we cannot, by such means, do more than suggest its probability. But what we may seem to lose here, we more than gain elsewhere. For we have come to see that our Theism rests upon a wider basis; upon an instinctive consciousness of our whole personality in which feeling, will, and action all play their part.

This does not involve any contradiction of the verdict of our reason, that the universe must be ultimately rational, and goodness and beauty coincide with truth. It merely means that our present conviction is in advance of our complete understanding — that "we know in part and prophesy in part"; looking to reason not to demonstrate, but progressively to illuminate the Object of our faith.

CHAPTER IV

TRANSCENDENCE AND AUTHORITY

We have alluded above to the notion that the conception of God's immanence or indwelling presence in the universe represents a truer and more mature point of view; before which that of His transcendence must ultimately give way, and become obsolete. But as this opinion, with all the confusion of thought that it involves, is somewhat prevalent in the present day, it may be well to pause upon it for a while in passing.

In the first place, it should be obvious from what has been said before that the notion in question is unphilosophical; since the metaphysical contention of Plato and Aristotle has been approved by subsequent thinkers in every age—the contention that we cannot account for relative and finite existence at all, except as grounded in an absolute and infinite Being—in a Being, that is to say, which is transcendent.

And this is not a mere postulate, or hypothesis, which we assume for our convenience; but a positive affirmation of our reason. When, for instance, we contemplate the endless stream of secondary causation, we conclude that it must have a source which transcends, and is not itself a part of the stream. And it is the same with all other relative phenomena. By the very fact of being obviously relative and dependent, they point beyond themselves, to something which in the language of Aristotle must "not be immersed in them if it is to control them" (*ἀμιγὴς ἵνα κρατῇ*). But as most men prefer to have such thoughts as these expressed in less abstract and more concrete form; we will put the point in its directly theological shape. "God dwells in the universe, we say, and sustains it by His indwelling presence. *Deus est in toto mundo*, says St. Thomas, *ut anima in toto homine.* "God is in the whole world, as a man's soul is in his whole body." And if we wish to describe this truth by a philosophical term we call it the divine immanence. But when Christians make this statement, as in one shape or another they have always done, they mean by God and the world two different things; no less different

than the Creator and the creature. And it is only as long as this distinction is preserved that the statement in question retains its meaning. God, whose very name implies that He is not the world, yet indwells and sustains the world by His indwelling. "Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly" . . . "the Lord our God who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth." The paradox of it is its very point. And it may not uncharitably be doubted whether many of those who say that the conception of transcendence has been banished by that of immanence, do not vaguely and illegitimately retain an element of the former in mind; which enables them to credit their statement with a more satisfactory meaning than it actually possesses. For as a mere question of the use of language, to speak of immanence or indwelling, inevitably implies some kind of distinction between the indweller and the indwelt. And the phrase can only retain its ordinary meaning so long as this distinction is present to the mind. But if the whole notion of transcendence is rigorously excluded, we can no longer distinguish between God and the universe

except as different aspects of one and the same thing. We can speak by abstraction of God as the soul of the universe, and conversely of the universe as the body or expression or manifestation of God. But we are not allowed by our hypothesis to regard the two as in any mode or degree separable; since they are only different ways of describing the same reality, which may equally well be called nature or God. In a word we are landed in pantheism, and committed to the position that pantheism is superior to Theism. But this is old ground in the history of thought, and argues no new insight on the part of modern thinkers. Pantheism is full of speculative difficulties which have again and again been critically exposed. But we have agreed to confine the subject to its more concrete aspect; and will therefore merely notice the bearing of pantheism upon morality. If God is regarded as simply and solely the sustaining principle of universal life, which includes, of course, the life of man, He must be conceived to be as directly the source of evil as of good actions. In other words, the distinction between good and evil becomes meaningless; since both alike are the results of the same divine or natural

activity; a sinister inference which in the popular practice of pantheistic races has only too frequently been drawn.

The Eastern philosopher endeavours to evade this difficulty by proclaiming the unreality of matter, and therefore of all material life. It is *maya*, he says, an illusion, which no more affects the divine Being, than do evil dreams an awakened man.

Such a theory, which even if it seems to save their notion of God, obviously cannot protect their morals, needs no serious refutation for the Western mind; though it has at times crept from the East into the borders of the West, and is not wholly unknown there in the present day. But of course it is both unscientific and unphilosophical. That it is unscientific goes without saying; for it reduces the whole realm of science to a dream. But it is equally repugnant to all sane philosophy. For "matter," as we call it, is indeed relative, unstable, impermanent; changing its forms from day to day. "The mountain falling cometh to nought." And in this sense it might be called, in the abstract, unreal. But it does not exist in the abstract but in concrete union with spiritual life; the life of God, who sustains

it in Being as, in a measure, the manifestation of Himself; and the life of man, whose instrument of action it provides. Each moment of matter, therefore, as it passes, is the expression of a spiritual fact, and instinct with the reality of spirit. The heavens that declare the glory of God change their aspect, but renew their message, in fresh form, from day to day. The words and deeds of yesterday have fled away past all recall, but their consequences are permanent, for evil or for good. "No power," says the Roman poet, "can ever make undone what the fleeting hour has once borne away."

neque
Diffinget infectumque reddet
Quod fugiens semel hora vexit.

So far, then, from any unreality of matter involving the indifference of moral conduct, the awful seriousness of moral obligation carries with it the reality of the material world, which is at once the instrument and stage of its realization.

In a word, then, pantheism is incompatible with moral freedom and, therefore, with personality or character either in God or man; and represents, accordingly, a far lower and less mature stage of theological thought than Theism. It is necessary,

therefore, to emphasize the fact that directly we speak of divine immanence as if it were a superior alternative to divine transcendence, we are logically and inevitably committed to this irrational position. For to allow the faintest distinction in the divine attitude towards good and evil, is instantly to reintroduce the conception of transcendence. Since if God in the least degree prefers, or is even capable of preferring, good to evil, He is, *ipso facto*, morally transcendent—"the power not ourselves that makes for righteousness."

Thus transcendence and immanence are not alternative but correlative conceptions in theology. The one guards us from the pantheistic confusion of God with the universe; the other from the Neoplatonic separation of the two. Together they express what was first the Jewish and then the Christian belief; that God is at once eternally other than His creation, and yet intimately present in its every part. And the Incarnation has always been regarded by the Church as the fullest manifestation of this dual truth. Jesus Christ, as very man, "of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting," tempted in the wilderness, weary at the well, praying in

Gethsemane, dying on the cross, is the extreme exhibition of God's presence within the things of His creation. But it is not the exhibition of a God who is merely immanent; for it is instinct throughout with reference to such a union with the Father as implies transcendence of created things; and in His miracles, His sinlessness, His awful authority of tone, flashes of this transcendence appear. Of course in saying this we touch controversial ground, every inch of which has been critically contested; and to say it, therefore, is to imply our conviction that all such criticism has been or can be reasonably met. But this is not our present point, which is simply to state what the Church has historically taught and still teaches about the Incarnation. It has not attempted to explain what, if true, must be to us inexplicable. It simply affirms that Jesus Christ is God as well as man, and as such essentially distinct from all mere men; the Son in His own house, while they are sons by adoption. "I live," says St. Paul, "yet not I, Christ liveth in me." But it would be beyond expression inconceivable that he ever should have claimed the faintest personal equality with Christ. On the contrary, the very phrase implies

the essentially qualitative distinction which rendered such union possible.

Thus the creed of the Church is utterly and wholly incompatible with any approach to the notion that Jesus Christ revealed the latent divinity of man; in the sense that He exhibited in Himself what men potentially are, and may therefore in actuality become. On the contrary, the Incarnation revealed God's transcendence, as well as His immanence; and enabled the unique atonement through which men might ultimately be upraised to a union with God, which they could never in their sinfulness have otherwise attained.

The divine transcendence, then, is no mere matter of abstract speculation. It is the vital truth on which our whole Christian religion depends, and the justification of the tone of authority with which it confronts the world.

It is probable that the word "authority" gains its first and most obvious meaning in the popular mind, from the secular authority of the state, with its universality of control, its positive laws, its physical power of coercion. When therefore we speak of religious authority, or the authority of religion, a thing whose sanctions are invisible, and whose sway is confined to those who willingly

accept its yoke, we almost seem to be using a metaphor; or at least employing the term in a derivative and secondary sense. But such a supposition really inverts the facts. For all authority, in the eyes of a Theist, must in the last analysis be of divine origin, and can be adequately based upon no other ground. Take, for instance, what we call secular authority; the power which enacts and administers the laws of a land. This may express itself, at different stages of national development, as the authority of the king, or of a ruling class, or of the people. And it may degenerate, in any of these hands, into mere tyranny, or brutal coercion. But wherever and whenever it is by common consent accepted, as a thing properly exercised, and therefore to be obeyed: what is its justification? What does it represent? It represents the claim of a whole over its parts; of a nation or society over its individual members; its right to control each for the good of all; and that for no arbitrary reason, but because man is essentially a social being, who, as such, can only attain his true development, through the development of society at large; the whole and its parts being mutually interdependent. Thus an individual man can only fulfil his destiny

by recognizing that he is a part of a whole, and acting accordingly, both in what he does and in what he leaves undone. He must do his own work, perform his own function, make his own contribution to the welfare of the whole ; while he must not hinder or interfere with the correlative duty of all others to do the like. And, correspondingly, it is the business of the whole, or of those who exercise authority over the whole society, or state, or nation, so to legislate, so to use their authority that all its individual members may be encouraged to perform their proper functions, and discouraged from interference with the corresponding functions of others.

Such is the ideal of government, however imperfect its realization in a sinful world. But what is its justification? Upon what is it ultimately based? Why is the majority entitled to control the individual? Hobbes, writing in an unhistorical age, pictured the natural state of man as one of unlimited self-assertion, resulting in a war of each against all (*bellum omnium in omnes*); whence government was a practical necessity, to make peace and progress possible. And Rousseau's theory of a social contract or agreement, to limit the individual by the general

will, was founded on a somewhat similar view of human nature. But history, with its concrete teaching, has brought vividly home to our age the truth which Aristotle clearly stated in the abstract long ago; that man is naturally a social being (φυσεῖ πολιτικός), destined by his very make and constitution for society; and consequently that what is now called altruism is as essential an element of his nature as self-regard. "There are as real and the same kind of indications in human nature, that we are made for society and to do good to our fellow-creatures; as that we were intended to take care of our own life, and health, and private good." Such was Butler's answer to Hobbes. And history bears it out. The unit of human development has not, historically, been the isolated individual, but the family, and the clan. Society and its members have grown up together, and need no artificial expedient to unite them, nor artificial theory to justify their union. We have that within us which instinctively impels us to community with others; and at every step of our development have been parts of some social whole, which in one degree or another has controlled our life. But meanwhile we live in a sinful world. Society

and its members are alike imperfect, selfish, sinful. Friction and collision in consequence continually occurs between them. Coercion becomes a necessity; and yet coercion may be wrongly applied. And the question inevitably arises "Why should we obey the laws?" Actually and immediately because we must, or we shall suffer in consequence. It is ill arguing with the master of legions. But a society, whose members were merely actuated by the fear of punishment, would obviously be no more than a collection of slaves, and their government a tyranny. Something very different from this is needed if society is to be the organ of our development, the instrument of our education, the condition of our freedom. This can only be when its members recognize that its laws are rational and right, and that, in the words of an old English moralist, "rightness implies oughtness"; we obey them because we ought; not because they are mighty, but because they are right. Here, then, we are driven back, behind all political or social enactments, to conscience, the sense of duty, the felt obligation of the moral law, as the only force that can insure rational obedience to secular authority. But conscience and the sense of

obligation are of no secular origin. It is true that empirical thinkers have attempted to derive them from the fear of punishment; and when this attempt broke down in its crude form, have suggested, in its stead, the inherited fear of ancient punishments, which had gradually been forgotten, and left only their instinctive dread behind them. But the fallacy of these theories has again and again been exposed; to the effect that they can always be shown on analysis to beg the question, by presupposing the moral judgment which they profess to explain. No alchemy can distil one drop of right from any quantity of might; or the awfulness of "I ought" from the commonplace of "I must." Every martyr who has faced death for conscience is a standing refutation of such theories.

We have to look deeper, then, for the origin of our sense of duty and its obligation. Bishop Butler, in accordance with the language of his day, speaks too much as if conscience were a separate faculty; but his description of its operation is not impaired thereby. "There is," he says, "a superior principle of reflection or conscience in every man, which distinguishes between the internal principles of his heart, as well as his

external actions; pronounces determinately some actions to be just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust; which without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself, and approves or condemns him, the doer of them accordingly: and which if not forcibly stopped, naturally and always of course goes on to anticipate a higher and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own. . . . It is by this faculty, natural to man, that he is a moral agent, that he is a law to himself: . . . a faculty in kind and in nature supreme over all others, and which bears its own authority of being so. . . . To preside and govern, from the very economy and constitution of man belongs to it. Had it strength, as it had right; had it power, as it had manifest authority it would absolutely govern the world."[1] We tend now to speak of conscience as our practical reason, or reason acting on conduct, rather than as a separate faculty. But this does not affect our point, which is its "supremacy." It "magisterially exerts itself." It has "manifest authority" to "absolutely govern the world." And this was what Kant called the "categorical imperative" of the

[1] Butler's *Sermons*, ii.

moral law—the unconditional, unqualified, absolute nature of its commands.

It may be granted that this "categorical imperative," or "supremacy of conscience," as we commonly call it, took time to gain clear recognition; and also that the content of morality, the particular things that were considered right or wrong have varied in different ages and among different races. But when once recognized the moral judgment "I ought" is distinguished from everything else in the world, by its absolute character; its intrinsic incapability of qualification or modification by anything outside itself. And it may reasonably be urged that the religious explanation of this fits more closely to the facts than any other;—the explanation that here, in the moral root of our being, we are in touch with the absolute, the transcendent; in other words with the will of God; which commands our unconditional allegiance, not essentially or primarily because it is absolutely powerful, but because it is absolutely good.

Against this it may be, and is often said that religion and morality are separable things, and often exist apart; as in the case where a low or degraded religion has little or no effect upon

conduct, or in the case where a high morality co-exists with individual agnosticism or unbelief. This may be true enough; yet such separation represents neither the normal, nor the ideal state of things. For normally morality has been developed and elevated by religious sanctions of one kind or another; and as a direct result of this development has grown so strong, that in exceptional cases it can stand alone. But such isolated morality does not represent the ideal, or in the deepest sense the natural state of man. For man is naturally religious, in the same sense that he is naturally social, however slow he may be to recognize the fact. The same need for communion with others which impels him outward to society impels him upward above all relative and finite things to God. Union with God is his supreme end, and therefore his supreme good, the condition of his complete realization, of his final satisfaction. And this satisfaction is not merely moral, though morality is its first condition; it is also intellectual, emotional, aesthetic; the fulfilment of all his desires for truth, beauty, and love. And the man who is moral without being religious, though he may be doing all that in his present state of mind it is possible for

him to do, is still blind to the vision of his true end, the destined goal of his development, and misses some virtues from the fact; while he is further involved in serious difficulty as to how moral goodness is to be determined and moral obligation to be explained. For the only adequate account of the absoluteness of moral obligation is, as we have said, that it is of divine origin. God is the supreme good of man; and we naturally and inevitably seek our own good when once we know it. When we have been convinced that a thing is true we immediately accept it as such. And goodness has been called the truth of action or conduct. To recognize it is at once to desire it. Hence God's authority over us is not merely founded on His power or His will, if we may make such abstractions, but on His nature. He is the good of each man and of all men; and in seeking Him we are seeking that realization of ourselves, in union with all others, which is the inmost necessity of our being.

The whole of which we are members is ultimately God's universe, and the conditions of its harmonious working are the expressions of His will. And as Butler says, "Your obligation to obey this law is its being the law of your nature."

We do not, of course, think of all this when we predicate "good," in ordinary life, of a man's character or conduct; still less when we apply the term to things like health, or wealth, or intellect; or even call our possessions our goods. But in the last analysis these things are good because, and only in so far as they lead us Godward and so conduce to our true end, our final and complete good. If we divert them from this end, and so waste our goods, we immediately convert them into evils; as when we say of misused health, or wealth, or talents, that they are no good to their possessor, or have done him no good.

But by the misuse of his free-will man can resist the divine attraction, and so go counter to the true law of his own nature. He can "set up an idol in his heart" and say "evil be thou my good." And if so, the divine authority of necessity assumes a new complexion. And the obligation of love gives way to the obligation of coercion. "If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." "Behold a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind;

it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked." "For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance," "the great and terrible day of the Lord," "for the hour of His judgment is come." But these appeals to fear do not, in the last analysis, create the sense of obligation which makes a man a law to himself; they are only the inevitable consequences of its transgression.

And thus it is with the lesser authorities of the world. So far as they represent the rightful claim of the whole over its parts, they represent a portion of the divine authority delegated to man; and we are under a corresponding obligation to observe them; while, in the case of disobedience, they on their side have the right to employ coercive sanctions. Such is the emphatic teaching of the apostles. "There is no power but of God," says St. Paul. "The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. . . . For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be

subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake." And St. Peter to the same effect: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. . . . As free and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

Such is the teaching of the New Testament on the august authority of secular law. Yet inasmuch as it is administered by human instruments, it is always liable to human error; with the result that laws may be enacted, which it is our duty to the greater whole, our duty to God, to disobey; as when the apostles themselves, St. Peter among them, were brought "before kings and governors" for Christ's sake, and answered "whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye." This right of conscience is, of course, the very opposite of anarchical insubordination, since it is based on the obligation of a higher law; nor, even so, is it a thing to be recklessly or frivolously used, without self-evident

necessity. But the fact of its existence, the fact that conscience does claim, in the last resort, to judge the human law by the divine, and to dispense from the former in obedience to the latter, is sufficient evidence of the relative position of the two; sufficient evidence that our obligation to obey human law is based upon, and conditioned by, our obligation to obey that which is divine.

It follows from this that religious authority or the authority of religion is far more fundamental than that of secular society; for it reflects God's essential and immediate claim upon us, as distinct from the derivative and delegated claim of our fellow men. And religious authority culminates in that of the Christian religion. For therein we have the clearest expression of what it is in the nature of God that constitutes Him the supreme good of our being, and goal of our life; in the revelation that "God is Love," and that "we love Him, because He first loved us." For the crown of all authority is the irresistible authority of love.

We will pass on, therefore, to consider some of the principal ways in which the authority of the Christian Church is exercised over its

members in the present day; with a view to pointing out that this is, in essence, as real as it has always been. It may be, as we have already said, less definite in outline, less patient of rigid formulation, than in ages of simpler thought than our own. It is much less easily recognizable by the outer world than when it was capable of being enforced — though unspiritually and disastrously enforced by secular sanctions. But it has the same power as of old to regulate the lives of all those who consciously accept it; and through their influence upon others, to elevate the world.

CHAPTER V

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

THE first note in the teaching of Jesus Christ, which we are told struck His hearers with surprise, was its authority; "He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes." We trace this authority in all His words and works, as well as in His contrast of Himself with other teachers, and it is equally conspicuous in all the four gospels. He Himself based this authority upon His mission from the Father. "I am come in my Father's name." "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." "I must be about my Father's business." "I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me I speak these things. And He that sent me, is with me . . . for I do always those things that please Him." At the same time it is no partial authority, like that of a prophet "speaking in the name of the Lord." It is that of a

plenipotentiary, full, complete, and personal; the divine authority not merely speaking through Him, but committed to Him. "For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also." It is His own, His personal authority, and issues in a corresponding claim to personal allegiance—"Follow me," "Come unto me," "Learn of me," "Take my yoke upon you," "Whoso cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." And it is significant in this connection that He wrote no book—nothing that in after ages might have come to be mechanically treated as a thing impersonal. He confined Himself to the personal influence of words, and deeds, that were quick with His own immediate vitality. While, in sharp contrast to His abstention from anything mechanical, He founded a society of living persons, who under the guidance of His Spirit, should, in each generation, live the Christian life, and so exercise in their measure personal influence upon the world.

But the right to claim personal authority must be recognized, before it can be accepted, and in vindication of this right Christ appeals to His works, His teaching, and His character, taken in

connection with his proclamation of mission from the Father. His works are not merely works of power, but of power uniformly governed by love, and are thus "the works of God." "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them." Such is His answer to the despondency of John. And again to the Jews: "The works which the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." "The works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me." "If I do not the works of my Father believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works." They are "the works which none other man did."

Then there is a similar appeal to His teaching. "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." "For I spake not from myself, but the Father which sent me, He hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak . . . the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak." They are "the words of God." "My teaching is not mine, but His that sent me."

And in immediate connection with His teaching, He appeals to His character. "Which of you convicteth me of sin?"

But character and words and works were but so many manifestations of the personality behind them, and it must have been the total effect of that personality, "full of grace and truth," that constituted its own self-evident claim to allegiance. We catch glimpses of this effect in the ready obedience of disciples to His call, in the confession of Peter "Thou art the Christ," and "Lord to whom shall we go; Thou hast the words of eternal life"; in the admission of the hostile officers, "Never man spake as this man," and their abashed amazement, when "they went backward and fell to the ground," and again in the enthusiastic homage of the multitude, who would have made Him their king.

Yet, in the end, He was only accepted by those who had the spiritual insight to recognize the self-evidence of sanctity; by "the men of good will." "No man cometh to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." "Ye believe me not, because ye are not of God."

And as our Lord worked through the immediate force of His personality, so he chose to continue

His work through the agency of human persons. He left behind Him disciples whose characters He had formed to found the Christian Church, a society of living persons united to Himself, and to one another by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit. "I have many things to say unto you," runs the record, "but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He the Spirit of Truth is come, He shall guide you into all truth. He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you"; and "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And it may be remarked in passing that to the Christian there is no real significance in the question raised by recent critics—the unanswerable question, as to how far the Church was founded by our Lord Himself while upon earth, and how far by His disciples after He had passed away: since, in the Christian view, those disciples were guided by His Spirit, and to that extent working His will. No subtlety of criticism will disturb the conviction of the Church that our Lord Himself, before His bodily presence was withdrawn within the veil, bade His disciples go and preach the gospel, that He bade them baptize, and that at the last supper He bade them "do this in remembrance of me." And this was

the sufficient germ of all subsequent development. But doubtless as He wrote nothing, so He organized nothing, but left all organization as all writing to those who had to meet and provide for new necessities as they arose.

The mission of the Church, then, as conceived by its first members, was to witness to Christ; to proclaim His authority over the whole of human life, and to win men to obey that authority with all that it involved. "Repent and be baptized every one of you," says St. Peter, "in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." "Giving thanks unto the Father," says St. Paul, ". . . who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Thus the Church possesses, according to its own tradition, a delegated authority from Christ, to administer His word and sacraments, and a continuous inspiration by the Holy Spirit to enable it so to do. It stands before the world, therefore, as a society created and sustained from above, having its origin and authority from heaven and not of men, a perpetual witness to God's claim upon the world. But it works through human persons, and human persons, however much in-

spired, are liable to err. Hence it can never escape an element of human fallibility and error. And the first and most obvious effect of this error is the disruption of its unity. Unity was the desire of its Founder, and is still the aspiration of its best members, but actually that unity has been marred by schism, and that from very early date. Some men take refuge from the sight of these sad divisions in the thought of an invisible Church; and doubtless true Christians everywhere are invisibly united through union with their spiritual Head. But it was not an invisible, but a visible Church that Christ and His apostles founded. It consisted of living men, and had visible and tangible sacraments. The very thing that it represented was the visibility of the divine, the capacity of the Spirit to act through matter. For it not only witnessed to the Incarnation, but carried the principle of the Incarnation out into the world. It baptized men and taught them that their bodies were to become temples of the Holy Ghost. It bade them assemble themselves together, lifting up holy hands in prayer. It prescribed them a day for special worship, and fed them with a holy food. In a word it made them members of Christ, not, that is, of God

invisible, but God incarnate. "That which . . . we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of life—for the life was manifested, and we have seen it and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us —that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." Visibility is the keynote of it all.

But the visible, the corporate unity of the Christian Church is gone, and with its loss we are at once landed in the controversies that have never subsequently ceased, as to where the true Church is to be found. Rome cuts the knot simply by proclaiming itself the one true Church, and ruling all others out of account. But we English who deny this, regard the Church as divided into branches. And this again raises the question, What constitutes a branch? It is a question which may obviously receive, as it historically has received, different answers. And we naturally turn for light upon it to the days of the Church's unity, the days of the primitive Church. For though in matters of ordinary knowledge it is true, as Bacon reminds us, that we and not the ancients have the

wisdom of the ages,—the wisdom gathered from the ever enlarging experience of the world,—the case is otherwise with the Christian Church. For the Church as we have seen bears witness to a fact of history; and the earliest Christian ages were nearest to that fact. The Christian tradition was started by those who could say "we have seen," and carried on by those who could say "we have talked with those who saw," and is therefore of necessity most vivid as it nears its fountain-head.

Moreover, it was not merely the fact of history but its interpretation that the Church proclaimed; and that interpretation was given once for all by the inspired writers of the New Testament. Subsequent generations may have enlarged its application, but they have not changed its essence. It comes to us as it was first taught by the men who sealed their witness with their lives.

And when we pass beyond all this to the age of councils and of creeds we find the Christian consciousness, the mind of the Church, as expressed by all its leading men, ever anxious to preserve the apostolic tradition—to do and teach, as the apostles were held to have taught and done. And why?—but because they believed their function to be the transmission

of a witness—witness to a fact of infinite and age-long significance, that never could grow obsolete or old.

There is nothing, therefore, reactionary, no academic antiquarianism, in our Christian appeal to antiquity; for the antiquity in question is not a past from which we are sundered by long ages, but the advent of the power by which we live to-day—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever."

Now the first essential of a visible society is organization, and when we turn to the organization of the early, undivided Church, we find that it centres in the episcopate, which is, of course, generically a priesthood, but a priesthood of a specific kind. "A bishop," in the words of Hooker, "is a minister of God, unto whom with permanent continuance there is given not only power of administering the Word and Sacraments, which power other presbyters have; but also a further power to ordain ecclesiastical persons, and a power of chiefty in government over presbyters as well as laymen, a power to be by way of jurisdiction a Pastor even to Pastors themselves." Now there can be no question that as a fact of history the general opinion of

the early Church ascribed the institution of this office to the apostles themselves; bishops were regarded as the authorized successors of the apostles. As early as the end of the first century Clement of Rome writes to the Corinthians, "The apostles have preached to us from our Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ from God. Christ, therefore, was sent by God, the apostles by Christ. . . . And thus, preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits of their conversions to be bishops and ministers over such as should afterwards believe." And Irenaeus in the second century says, "We can enumerate those who were instituted by the apostles as bishops in the different Churches." While the importance of the office, as early as the opening years of the second century, is attested in the famous epistles of Ignatius, which chiefly for this reason have been subjected to criticism as later forgeries, but criticism which may now be said to have finally collapsed. "Be subject to your bishop," he says, "your bishop presiding in the place of God, submitting to him, or rather not to him, but to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the bishop of us all." "See that ye all follow your bishop; as Jesus Christ

the Father." "Let no man do anything of what belongs to the Church separately from the bishop . . . but whatsoever he shall approve of; that is also pleasing to God."

Various critical questions have been raised since the Reformation, and more especially of recent years, as to the origin of the episcopate, with a view to suggesting that it was evolved, so to speak, from below rather than imposed from above; that it gradually and sporadically arose, that is to say, out of vaguer and less definite forms of ministry, instead of being commissioned by the apostles to continue and transmit their own authority. We need not for our present purpose discuss these criticisms in detail; for that purpose is to consider the significance of the episcopate rather than its origin.[1]

But a general remark upon the subject may be allowed in passing. There are confessedly some literary allusions to the episcopate which seem to conflict with the usual view of the Church. And they have been supposed, in some quarters, to be reinforced of late years by possible inferences from the recently discovered "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." Yet if the difficulties thus created

[1] See Note B.

were put at their strongest,—which would in itself be a great concession,—even then, the smallness of their proportion to the mass of counter-evidence must be borne in mind. Moreover, any attempt to draw general conclusions from the passages in question depends largely for its possibility upon our ignorance of the later apostolic and sub-apostolic history. It is of the nature of the argument from silence (*argumentum e silentio*) and has all the weakness of that argument. We do not know what happened, and may therefore, it is assumed, make a conjectural hypothesis, out of some half-lights in the literature that has come down to us. But this assumption presupposes that the Christians of the second century were as ignorant as we are of what their own fathers and grandfathers had been doing, and that despite of the intense emphasis which they lay upon fidelity to the apostolic tradition. For there can be no question that by that time the episcopate was an established fact, and generally believed to be of apostolic institution; on which Hooker makes the appropriate comment, "No doubt but being established by them on whom the Holy Ghost was poured in so abundant a measure for the ordering of Christ's Church,

it had either divine appointment beforehand or divine approbation afterwards, and is in that respect to be acknowledged the ordinance of God."[1]

It is reasonable to maintain, therefore, as the Church of England does by implication, that those and those Churches only which have retained the historic episcopate are in point of organization identical with the primitive, the undivided Church, and are consequently, despite their disunion, legitimate branches of the Catholic Church.

But our present purpose is not to argue this point as against those Christians who hold other views, but merely to enucleate the fact that the episcopate has descended from the earliest ages, and rules the immense majority of Christians to-day, in order to raise the question, What does this episcopate represent? What does it symbolize to the world?

For it is, beyond question, a great fact; it looms large in human history — this order of spiritual rulers that has outlived successive dynasties, itself instinct, the while, with a vitality that does not age. It is older in England than the Norman, older than the Saxon conquest, yet

[1] Hooker, E. P., vii. 5, 1.

as quick with energy as ever in the world to-day. It is independent of all forms of political organization; independent of all outward conditions of life; whether called to crown a monarch with the pomp and circumstance of ancient state, or to live in exile and die in martyrdom among the savage islands of the sea. It has passed, in its long history, through many a vicissitude, and seen its days of power and days of persecution; days of reverence and days of ridicule; dark days, too, at times, of degradation from within. But still, through evil report and good report it has persisted; and is as strenuous as ever in its missionary enterprise to-day. It is no ordinary thing, then, this Christian episcopate, to be explained by ordinary causes; for no other institution has retained its youth after well-nigh twenty centuries of troubled existence. Its changeless identity, which challenges our wonder, is a part of its spiritual witness to a world of chance and change. For the episcopate is at once the symbol and the instrument of God's authoritative hold upon the world through Christ; since, though a bishop may be designated by king or minister or people, he can only be made a bishop by the imposition of a bishop's hand,

the hand of one who in his turn has received in like way the like authority. And that authority points back, as we have seen, to the first commission of the apostles by Him who proclaimed His own commission from the Father, and promised to be with them "always even unto the end of the world."

In saying this we must of course allow that the lineal continuity of the episcopate is not a thing that admits of proof; and may always therefore be liable to objections like those forcibly urged by Macaulay. Macaulay, in a well-known passage of his essays, following Chillingworth, argues that, as a matter of ordinary probability, there must have been many irregular ordinations, and consequent breaches of the succession during the obscurity of the Middle Ages when, as he says, "the facts that are discernible through that obscurity prove that the Church was exceedingly ill-regulated."

This again, we may remark, is mainly an *argumentum e silentio*; and ignores both the tenacity of the Christian tradition and the Christian belief in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But after all it is only a hypothetical objection, and does not therefore require more

than a hypothetical answer. If, therefore, we may answer, through the element of error in all things human, irregular ordinations did at times occur, we may well believe that the Holy Spirit would exceptionally remedy the exceptional defect, and so reconstitute the normal order.

For the principle that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath is one that must govern all sacramental ordinances. They may be normal instruments, but can never be limiting conditions of the Spirit's action. We recognize that action among Christians who are without the episcopal organization; and need not, therefore, hesitate to admit the like on occasion among those that are within.

The objections in question, therefore, do not invalidate the broad historic fact that the episcopate exists and has existed through the ages with a continuous claim to be at once an instrument and a symbol of God's authority over man. Nor is the significance of this claim affected by the fact that it is only admitted by Christians. The authority of Christ Himself was only accepted in His earthly lifetime by the few. And our present point is not the success of the claim, but its existence. From the foundation of

the Church it has always been present in the world. The witness has always been borne; the protest always made; God's authority always asserted.

But it may be urged against all this by the comparative student of religion that the Christian priesthood is after all only a special instance of a world-wide and world-old phenomenon, and cannot be explained by itself. All nations and peoples have had their priests, appointed in various ways; and oftentimes of very conspicuously human origin. The Christian priesthood must not, therefore, be isolated from its context in human history and treated as a thing apart, since it is only the latest expression of what would appear to be a general instinct in mankind.

This demurrer may be made from very different points of view, ranging from that of the agnostic who regards all priesthoods as equally fraudulent to that of the Theist who merely wishes to undermine the foundations of what he considers objectionable sacerdotalism.

Now the premises of this argument are perfectly true; but not necessarily the conclusion. For the conclusion is only another instance of that misuse of evolutionary theory which we

have often had occasion to criticize; the misuse which consists in assuming that a thing cannot rise higher in value than its point of historic origin. Whereas in a rational and, therefore, teleological world, such as we have scientific grounds for holding ours to be, it is the later that illuminate the earlier stages of development by showing what they were destined in the course of time to become. And this is precisely what the Christian episcopate does. It has confessedly its roots in the past; reaching back into the dim distance of prehistoric ages. It is akin to the Jewish priesthood before it, and thence to all the earlier priesthoods of the world. But it is the culmination—the definite, articulate, rational culmination of all this priesthood. It is priesthood grown self-conscious, clearly aware, that is, of its own meaning; and therefore aware of what in earlier ages it only stammered to express. For the religious instinct, which we now recognize to be so elementary a part of human nature, early issued in the institution of priesthood. And, however degraded that priesthood might be, when its gods were conceived of as "partial, vengeful, passionate, unjust," it still symbolized the authority of the divine in human life. And

when religious conceptions were gradually refined and purified, as most notably among the Jews, this witness of the priesthood rose correspondingly in character. But with the advent of Christ "not to destroy but to fulfil" came a clearer revelation of the Fatherhood of God and of its essential foundation in love. The Shepherd of Israel was thenceforth revealed as the Good Shepherd of the world. And priesthood thereafter became a pastorate, a shepherd's office, whose function was to "tend the flock of God . . . exercising the oversight (ἐπισκόπην, bishoprick) not of constraint but willingly, according unto God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock."[1]

Thus the significance of the Christian priesthood, so far from being in any way diminished, is immensely enhanced by its organic connection with all that went before: since that connection unifies and illuminates the spiritual history of the world. For the old notion of a primitive revelation to man had come to seem, at least to many minds, untenable, in the light of new opinions on

[1] 1 Peter v. 2, 3.

the lowly origin of our race. But psychological inquiry now gives back to us, in the name of instinct, much if not all of the important truth which that notion enshrined. For we find a religious tendency, with rare exceptions, that may well be due to degradation, like the atrophy of unused organs—a religious tendency that would seem to be a very part of the make and constitution of man. While from the dimmest dawn of history we see this instinct issuing in the differentiation of an order of men, who should represent, however obscurely, the divine claim upon the world; and impress, however crudely, a spiritual sanction upon human affairs. Further, in one race, this claim rises, by degrees that we can but partly trace, to that of One, authoritative, almighty, holy, loving God, who "at divers times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers." "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." And finally from this race issues, in the fulness of time, One whom we Christians believe to be no less than God Incarnate; renewing and reinforcing by the august appeal of His own redeeming love, God's claim over the hearts and minds and consciences of

men; and sending messengers to win Him the allegiance of all subsequent ages.

These messengers are still amongst us, and still transmit their office in words of spiritual authority—authority to preach the Word—the Word made flesh; and authority to administer the sacraments which unite us through His body, the Church to Himself its Head.

Thus the comparison with earlier religions does but emphasize the value of the Christian priesthood, by showing its roots to be as old as history; rising at first, it may possibly be, from an almost instinctive human tendency, which is thus seen to be a prophetic signature impressed upon our race, to claim us from our origin for God.

It will be noticed that we have been speaking only of one aspect of the Christian Church, namely, its organization. Our object has been to emphasize the fact that Jesus Christ not only claimed spiritual authority over man, in virtue of His mission from the Father, the source of all authority; but also left behind Him a society, to perpetuate the claim. And the corollaries of this fact that we would emphasize are two—first, that there still exists a religious authority in the

Christian episcopate and its attendant priesthood, which is identical with that of old, and wholly unaffected, as authority, by any advances of criticism or fluctuations of popular prejudice. It is a common, a traditional authority which its temporary possessors can only exercise, as such, within the strict limits of their original commission, and not for any further or individual end.

But within those limits it enables them to act and speak with secure certainty as living organs in their generation, of the divine invitation to men, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Secondly, we would notice that though this authority only exists, as such, for those who are willing to accept it, yet the fact that it exists at all has a striking evidential value. It arrests attention, and must be reckoned with, in any account of human history. Despite the many difficulties which beset our thoughts upon the matter, we can hardly help believing that the earth's long evolution has a purpose, and that the crown of that purpose is the existence of man.

> all tended to mankind
> And, man produced, all has its end thus far:
> But in completed man begins anew
> A tendency to God.

We find that when man appears in history, his nature has already prompted him to recognize a spiritual environment and in its service to differentiate priesthoods. These priesthoods culminate in the Christian ministry, which with clear consciousness claims to be the human instrument through which God Incarnate normally appeals to man; and, in fact, as a result of that claim, has continued to create through the ages that Christian character which exhibits the noblest type of life that the world has seen. It is difficult to many minds not to recognize in all this the operation of God in history claiming the allegiance of mankind.

CHAPTER VI

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CREED

It is of course only by a somewhat artificial process of abstraction that we can consider the organization of the Church, apart from its doctrines; and we will now pass from the authority of the teachers to the authority of their teaching. That teaching has in the past been dogmatic in its method; and in the present day there is a widespread objection to dogmatic teaching about things divine; especially when couched in the language of a bygone age. We have therefore to consider, in the face of this objection, what is the rationale of Christian dogma.

In the first place, we have seen that the Church was founded by a living Person, and committed to living persons to hand on. And what is it that they were to hand on? Primarily a life, a new life. "I am come that they might have

life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Men are to be enrolled in the new society and thereby united to its living Head; their wills enfranchised, their affections uplifted, their energies intensified, their whole existence quickened by "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." And the distinguishing characteristic of this life was love. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." While the very mechanism by which this new life was symbolised and conveyed was itself alive and personal; oral teaching, baptism, the laying on of hands, the breaking of bread, all involve personal action and contact with persons. The whole atmosphere throbs and palpitates with life. It is easy, therefore, to contrast with all this what is sometimes called the deadness of dogmatic formulae; and to maintain that in such a living society as this, these formulae have no fundamentally essential place, no indispensably necessary function. Such old documents, it is urged, must of necessity grow obsolete; and the life of to-day cannot be fettered by the dead hand of the past. But will this bear examination? Is the contrast true?

To begin with, all human life involves

consciousness. To live to any purpose we must know what we mean and what we are about. And all religious life involves a religious consciousness, a conception of God and our relation to Him. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Naturally, therefore, the Christian life involves the Christian consciousness, the Christian belief about God and His relation to man. It is a living union with a living Person; but a necessary part of that union must consist in thought. The function of the Church is to win the world to Christ; but this necessarily involves teaching who and what Christ is; and this has always, as a matter of history, meant teaching the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. These doctrines differentiate the Christian from all other religions. And the authority to transmit the Church implies the authority to transmit the doctrines, not as intellectual conceptions apart from the life that they enable, but as the intellectual conditions of that actual life which from age to age is being handed on.

There are of course various bodies who claim the Christian name while denying both the doctrines in question; but they would admit that

in so doing they use the name in a different sense from the Catholic Church as above defined, which has always taught these doctrines as the essence of its message. Now the doctrine or teaching about the Trinity and the Incarnation consists partly in a statement of facts, namely, the facts of the historic life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and partly in a particular interpretation of those facts. Of course many modern critics would put the resurrection in the class of interpretations; but that is never how the Church has historically viewed it. In the view of the Church it is an event which happened and was described by those who had seen and spoken with the risen Lord. The Church then teaches that these facts took place; and that the true interpretation of them is that which sees in them the Incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity. And this teaching is compendiously summed up in the three creeds which are accepted with one subtle difference between the East and West, by all the branches of the catholic or episcopally governed Church. And these creeds are dogmatic; they do not teach hypothetically but categorically or with authority. "This is," they say in effect, "what Christians believe, and it is

this belief which enables them to live the Christian life." "Whosoever therefore would live the Christian life, and die in the Christian hope of the future must thus think of the Trinity and the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We do not now propose to discuss these doctrines; but merely the authoritative mode of their presentation. In the first place, then, it should be noticed that if these doctrines are true, they can only be known to us by revelation, that is to say on authority. That revelation we believe to have consisted partly in Christ's own life and teaching; partly in the subsequent illumination of the apostles by the Holy Spirit, enabling them to understand the significance of that life and teaching, as He had promised. "When He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth. . . . He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Hence arose the Christology, as it is now called, of the early Church; from the inspired interpretation of the facts concerning Jesus Christ. We may argue as to the probability or improbability of this revelation, and examine the various evidences that may be given of its truth; but if we are once convinced that it is true, that it is

a revelation from God, we must accept it as authoritative, or on its own authority. The very notion of a revelation implies something beyond our natural power of discovery, or of criticism; we may subsequently recognize its reasonableness, but cannot demonstrate it by reason; while, on the other hand, however much we might disbelieve it, we could never disprove it by reason. If, therefore, the Church exists to transmit the good news of a revelation to the world, and to perpetuate a type of character founded on that revelation, it must of necessity present its message in authoritative form. "These are the facts, and this is the catholic interpretation of those facts."

First it witnesses to the facts; it states authoritatively that they happened; and facts can be attested in no other way. But it includes in these facts the supernatural birth and the resurrection of Christ; neither of which, we are told by many critics, can be called facts, in any ordinary sense of the term. Of course neither the one nor the other has a place in secular records; they are not in the plane of ordinary history. But the Church, as the extension of the Incarnation, moves in the spiritual as well as in the secular world.

And there may be facts in the history of the Church, in the literal sense of events which actually happened; but which were only known and believed within the Christian circle, by those who were spiritually prepared to receive them. And such, in the belief of the Church, were the two facts in question. They occurred in the world, but they were not known in the world's history; they were only known to those who were "not of the world," and "of whom the world was not worthy," those whose personal devotion to Christ had morally merited further knowledge of Him, and intellectually prepared them for its acceptance. This does not of course mean that these events were spiritual, in the often misused sense of the word, as having no contact with the external, the material order. On the contrary, their whole significance for us lies in the fact that they had such contact. It simply means that, like some State secret known only to an initiate few, they were only known to those to whom Christ Himself had given "power to become sons of God."

Then we come to the interpretation of the facts. It will hardly now be denied that the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation were

held in the apostolic age with sufficient clearness to lead naturally to the further definition which they subsequently received. Even those who consider them erroneous have to admit their early origin. And the Church of the second century, which proclaims them so decidedly, attributes them emphatically to the apostolic tradition. They are the intellectual presuppositions of the Church's message that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," and were developed, as we believe, by the Holy Spirit in the minds of the men who were so conscious of His guidance that they could definitely say, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." Naturally, therefore, the Church teaches these doctrines with authority, for it could teach them in no other way. Its business is to make men Christians; and the Christian life and character cannot be founded on an hypothesis or an open question—"a great perhaps," but only on the rock of a definite belief about God and His relation to mankind; namely, that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son to the end that all who believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." But obviously the doctrines in question were not

as formulated in the apostolic age as they subsequently came to be. And it is the degree of authority attaching to their subsequent formulation that raises difficulties in many minds at the present day.

In the first place, we must remember the avowed object of the creeds, which was simply to guard the apostolic tradition. New questions involved new answers, expressed in the phraseology of the day. But the intention of those answers, in the minds of the men who made them, was to reassert the Church's original belief. And it is in this sense that we receive them, and no other. In other words they are compendious summaries, though sometimes in new terms, of what is contained in the New Testament as traditionally interpreted by the undivided Church, or of the apostolic tradition as reflected in the pages of the New Testament, and are not to be taken as meaning more than this. To take a single illustration from the Athanasian creed, the distinction there emphasized between the Son as begotten and the Spirit as proceeding may easily look like a piece of undue dogmatism on the mystery of the divine nature, which we can so little comprehend. But in reality it is the very

reverse of this, being simply an assertion that, just because we know so little, we must abide by the language of Scripture, which in the one case says "begotten," and in the other "proceeding"; a mere re-affirmation of the Scriptural terms. Further, we must bear in mind that some of the Scriptural terms themselves are obviously symbolical — terms like "descended into hell," "ascended into heaven," or again "eternal fire" —symbolic adumbrations of realities that we cannot adequately apprehend. And different ages must inevitably differ in their interpretation of symbols, since they will interpret them according to their own modes of thought. The use of these phrases in the creeds, therefore, does not commit us to any bygone interpretation of them, any obsolete astronomy or mediaeval view of hell. It simply, as before, refers us back to Scripture, which we naturally interpret with the best light that we possess. But why should we not remodel the language of the creeds, it is sometimes asked, in places where it seems archaic and possibly suggestive of conceptions that we have outgrown? The complete and final objection to this lies in the divided condition of the Church. In the first place, the return from this state of division to one

of communion is, as we have seen, the necessary aspiration of all sincere Christians. And as long as the three creeds which have come down from the undivided days of the Church are still common to its now estranged and separated branches, we have a formulated agreement in essential doctrine, on which at least to found a hope of better days some time to come. Whereas if we in any way diminish the exactitude of this agreement we endanger the essential basis of future reunion, and to that extent defer its likelihood. And again the very fact of our division carries with it a corresponding inability to modify any formula which we share with others, who could have no concurrent voice in its modification. The promise of guidance into all truth was made to the apostolic, the united Church. And, as long as that union remained, a common Christian consciousness, a mind of the Church, is plainly discernible behind all the differences of individual opinion and fluctuations of popular feeling; and in this mind of the Church as expressed in the creeds, that is in its most authoritative and deliberate utterance, we are bound to recognize the promised guidance of the Spirit. But the different portions of the divided Church are partial in their views. They

emphasize different aspects of their common inheritance; and would inevitably import this partiality into any modification which they might attempt of a creed.

And this suggests a further thought. The creeds were drawn up at a period which, for all its metaphysical acumen, was simpler in thought than our own; and they reflect this comparative simplicity in their severe and definite outlines. They are the classic expression, so to say, of the bare essence of Christian belief; and stand to us, with our complexity of thought and multiplicity of views, much as a Greek statue does to a modern symphony. They keep us ever in mind of the fact that a certain element in our Christian thought is fixed, and does not change with our other intellectual changes; and that because, in the last analysis, it rests on revelation. We have had the distinction between revelation and theology much emphasized of late, to the effect that the former implies an experience, while the latter arises from intellectual reflection upon that experience. And accordingly the creeds might, on a superficial view, be classed as theological, But they are really historic; the epitomized history of a revelation. For they are the records of an experience handed

down from the witness of those to whom it occurred; together with the interpretation which these its original experts put upon it. The latter is theological, in a way; but it is with the theology of St. Paul and St. John. It represents, that is to say, the meaning which the experience in question possessed for those who underwent it; which for them therefore was an integral part of the total experience. For it was not merely the life and death and teaching or even the resurrection of Jesus Christ which constituted the gospel or good news of the apostolic Church, but the significance of His personality as realized, under the guidance of the Spirit, after His resurrection. And this significance involved the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, not of course as formulated in a later age, but as we find them in St. Paul and in St. John. For the course of recent criticism has sufficiently established the fact that what St. Paul calls his gospel, which certainly included these two doctrines, was common to him with the other leading apostles, and admitted by them as such. It was the current "gospel" of the Church, therefore, long before our present synoptic gospels were written, and is reflected at a later date in the writings of St. John. And it was this

gospel which the creeds were subsequently composed, as we have seen, to protect, and not in any degree to alter. This then is the positive content of the creeds—the statement of the experience of the apostles as interpreted by themselves. For what the apostles preached to the world was the history of Jesus Christ, together with the meaning which it had for themselves and the new life which it consequently enabled. And this made up one total experience, "I live yet not I. Christ liveth in me." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." All this is the language of personal experience, but of experience with which an element of theological interpretation is inseparably blent. And this may suggest that at their point of origin revelation and theology are not so easily separable as they subsequently become. When the men who claim to have received a revelation are dead and gone, we may speculate on the content of their message, and deduce theological conclusions from it; as,

for example, the various theories of the atonement, none of which were ever incorporated in a creed.

But the original witnesses to the Christian revelation do not present us with two separate things, a historic life, and its subsequent interpretation; but one thing, a particularly interpreted life. The interpretation, the significance of the life of Christ, is the subject-matter of their preaching. And the apprehension of this significance they attributed to the promised guidance of His Spirit, who should lead them into all truth. Doubtless this apprehension grew deeper and fuller as their life went on, and may have been greater in some than in others. But not till they had attained it in a marked degree did they preach at all; for it was the essence of their preaching. Their personal intercourse with Jesus Christ, together with the change of thought and character to which it led, formed one total, indivisible experience; and this they proclaimed.

"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves know . . . This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and

having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

Such is the first recorded Christian sermon; and St. Peter is here speaking under the personal experience of the Spirit's indwelling presence. Now the object of the Church's existence is to perpetuate the possibility of this experience; to enable men in every successive generation to attain what the earliest Christians possessed, the gift of the Holy Ghost. But the experience of this gift was part of a whole; it was inseparably connected with their belief in Christ as the only-begotten Son of the Father, their obedience to His commandment—His new commandment of love, and their faith in His promise to be with them to the end of the world. If, therefore, the experience of the first Christians is to be reproduced in us to-day—the experience that led St. Paul to say "I live yet not I. Christ liveth in me"—it must be reproduced in the same context and connection. We must possess and act upon the belief that made their experience possible. Hence the necessity of the creeds. They are historical. They summarize the life of Christ, and what as a fact of history the early

Church believed about Him. Two of them, indeed, employ language which was the result of later controversies. But they do this, as we have seen above, in the belief that it was the fittest language that they could employ, and under a sense of guidance by the Holy Spirit. Some of this language we might like to change into a more modern form. But from this we are precluded, as we have said, by our divisions. It is a disability incidental to the various errors and mistakes which brought those divisions about; the inevitable penalty of their existence. We must use the ancient language therefore, even if with a sense of its being at times archaic, as being the utterance of the undivided Church. For it enshrines the two central doctrines of our belief—the Trinity and the Incarnation. It keeps us in remembrance of the fact that these two doctrines are primitive and fixed, however much speculation may play round them. And to do this it must be, and could not possibly be other than dogmatic. And this is no defect, but a necessity of the case. For the Christian life and character is a definite and positive and concrete thing; and as such can only be sustained on a definite and positive and concrete creed. It is no merely sentimental

condition, or mere imitation of Christ's morality, but a personal allegiance to His Person. He claimed the obedience of man's mind, as well as of his heart and will, and claimed it as having authority from the Father. And the Church, which has an authoritative ministry to reiterate the claim along the ages, must also, of necessity, have an authoritative form in which to make it. And the possibility of this fixed form is due to the fact that, in its essential character, our Christian conception of God does not alter. Different ages and races have indeed laid a different emphasis upon the various divine attributes. But the belief in the Trinity and the Incarnation has always remained constant. It came to us, as we believe, from above; from the immediate action of the Spirit on the disciples who had personally seen and heard and conversed with the Lord, and on St. Paul after the experience of his conversion; and we can neither augment nor diminish it by human speculation. We are no nearer to an understanding of either doctrine than were the Fathers; the most speculative of whom are continually anxious to profess their own incapacity. Our knowledge of them is, in the well-known phrase, regulative rather than speculative. It

rules our conduct, that is to say, rather than informs our intellect. And our language on the whole subject is of necessity largely symbolical. But still these doctrines afford a fixed and authoritative basis for our practical life; which rescues it from the intellectual vagueness, the unreal sentimentalism, the moral hesitation which we continually see arising from indefinite and hypothetical conceptions of God. For in all our worldly affairs we know that success is impossible without a definite aim and object, a precise purpose which determines, among life's many possibilities, what we are to select, and what to leave alone. And the same law obtains in the spiritual life. As long as the great realities with which that life is concerned are treated as open questions for speculative discussion, or agnostic avoidance, the life itself is correspondingly indeterminate and vague. It may indeed aspire, but it cannot attain. Whereas the Christian life is founded on allegiance to a Person and consequent obedience to His personal authority; and this at once gives it precision of purpose. "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." "I

therefore so run not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." "With good will doing service as to the Lord and not to men." Such was the spirit that enabled the vast practical achievements of St. Paul.

Now obedience is never a quality that is naturally easy to man. But it is probably no exaggeration to say that in the present day its practice is exceptionally difficult. For we live in a critical age, and are accounted "nothing if not critical"; critical of everything, and amongst other things, of authority in all its forms. And criticism is the polar opposite of obedience. For it is the very essence of the one temper to raise questions before committing itself, and of the other to commit itself without question. The old notion, that obedience, as such, was a virtue for its own sake, would revolt the average modern mind, which views discontent as the necessary road to progress. Yet there is truth, profound truth as well as beauty in the saying that "the glory of all created beings, from the poising of the planets to the gravitation of a grain of dust consists in their obedience and not in their freedom."[1]

[1] Ruskin.

The objection, then, to dogma, as such, with its necessary implication of a claim to mental obedience, is naturally strong in the present day; for the intellectual temper of the age is against it. But this fact, in Christian eyes, so far from justifying its abolition, rather necessitates its re-assertion. Since it stands for the fact that there are certain central verities, which, though they profoundly influence our thought, were not attained by any process of mere thinking; but rest, in the last resort, upon authority — the august authority of Christ Himself, and of the Holy Spirit His interpreter. The words in which they have been transmitted by the Church are of necessity symbolical; but symbolical of a perfectly positive and definite belief—the belief that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

This is the belief on which is based our love of God, and of each other; and hence it is that when we meet for our great act of Christian worship we still say, in the old words that all the saints have used before us, the creed, the solemn symbol of our faith.

CHAPTER VII

THE AUTHORITY OF SACRAMENTS

The Church confronts the world, not only with a ministry and a creed which, if they are accepted at all, must in the last resort be accepted on authority, but also with sacraments which are in similar case. They may be rejected; but if they are accepted, they must be accepted on the authority of Christ and the Church, and represent the unqualified claim of that authority to human obedience. And this claim is unaffected by the different views that may be held about sacramental doctrine. It is the same to-day that it ever was; "This do."

In saying this we are at once met in the present day, as we have already been met in other regions, by the student of comparative religion. The things which we now call sacraments have their root in the remote past, and are as common among uncultured races, as among

the great religions of the earlier world. This is now so well known a fact that we need not pause to illustrate it; but may pass on to our immediate point, which is its frequent misuse in anti-Christian argument. Usages, ceremonies, customs, of the nature that we now call sacraments, notably baptisms and communion feasts, are plainly, we are told, in the light of history, seen to be human institutions, human inventions, with no supernatural authority about them. Indeed, the extreme view is sometimes maintained that these religious customs were actually prior to religious beliefs; and that the latter gradually arose from the desire to explain or justify habits that had more or less instinctively grown up among men better accustomed to act than to think.

It is easy, therefore, to argue that the Christian sacraments, however elevated and refined, are yet the lineal descendants of these earlier customs, some of whose ritual accompaniments they undoubtedly did in time assimilate; and that consequently they are of purely human origin and can claim no unique authority. But this argument begs the question, in logical language, against the Incarnation. It assumes, that is to

say, that no such thing as the Incarnation ever took place. Whereas the Christian, who believes in the Incarnation, is able to give a totally different interpretation to the same facts. For the very meaning of the Incarnation is that God "took our nature upon Him" in order to act upon mankind through human means. But in so doing He raised those human means to a new level, and invested them with His own unique authority. Thus He took the fishermen of Galilee with all their faults, Peter with his cowardice, James and John with their ambition, as afterwards the Pharisaic persecutor Paul, and recreated them with "power from on high" to bear His witness to the world. He took the common sights and sounds of earth—the beauty of the lilies, the ripening of the corn, the branching of the vine, the wailing of the wind; and the daily offices of men—the sower, the shepherd, the fisherman, the labourer, the merchant of pearls, the woman sweeping the house,—He took all these ordinary things and stamped them with new spiritual significance, thenceforth to be His parables for ever. Now and again, as Christians believe, He impressed a new nature upon earthly elements, when He multi-

plied the loaves and fishes, and made the water wine.

The fact, therefore, that the Christian sacraments were fashioned out of common human customs does not preclude their being invested with a wholly new authority by Christ. In the words of Peter's vision, "What God hath cleansed, call not thou common or unclean."

There are, of course, extreme critics in the present day who deny that either baptism, or the Eucharist, the solemn "breaking of the bread," was instituted immediately by Christ Himself. But this is one of those extravagancies of criticism that can only be maintained by a reckless treatment of the New Testament and a total rejection of the tradition of the early Church. It is not, therefore, a contention that need be seriously discussed, as in any way disturbing the universal Christian belief.

There have, undoubtedly, been developments, both in the doctrine and the ritual of the sacraments, and divergencies of opinion about them; but none of these affect their authoritative character, as it has always been presented by the Church. Take, for example, the Eucharist, the great central act of Christian worship. Other

forms of divine service, litanies and prayers and praises, have been freely composed and adopted by the piety of men. But this alone comes down to us, through the tradition of the Church, as founded on the Lord's express command, "Do this in remembrance of me." Thus its institution emanates from Him who claimed to have authority from the Father, and in all His words and works to be carrying out the Father's will; and its acceptance, on the part of Christians, is primarily, and, all other considerations apart, an acknowledgment of that authority and an act of obedience to that will.

We have here, then, the same element of fixity and permanence that we have seen in the episcopate and the creed. The former reflects the divine changelessness in the constitution of the Church, and the latter in its belief. And the Eucharist has the like relation to its worship. It comes to us from Him who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." And it calls us to communion with Him who changeth not, and with whom "is no shadow of turning." And this is the very heart of its significance.

For there are many minds in the present day that may be described as tinged with religion, in

a way that is hardly more than sentimental; who speak, in fact, of religion as cosmic emotion, a thing of elusive outline and indefinite content. And their existence creates an atmosphere by which Christians themselves are often influenced. And then there is always the subjective side of religion, which is liable, even in the best of men, to fluctuate with the natural alterations of feeling. These fluctuations between elation and depression, rapture and despondency, light and darkness, confidence and care, have, in all probability, never been so acutely experienced, nor so adequately expressed as by many of those whom the world has recognized as among its greatest saints. But what is only a temporary trial, and consciously recognized as such, by characters of the heroic mould, is apt to be a very serious temptation to more ordinary Christians. For in their case failure of feeling may easily induce a relative degree of religious apathy, which often leads, while it lasts, to relaxation of moral effort, and, in consequence, more or less reaction of life.

Now in contrast to all this, the sacramental system of the Church keeps the objective element of our religion permanently before us. In thus using the term "objective" which has now

become so common in this connection, we ought perhaps to guard ourselves from possible misconception by saying that we simply mean by the term that element of our religious experience which comes to us, so to say, from without, from the region that is not ourself; that is, ultimately, from God. God is the sole Object of our religious consciousness, and all that radiates from God to us and is in any way God-given may therefore be called, in this sense, objective; as distinguished from the similarly termed subjective faith or feeling or obedience, which receives and appropriates it.

Of this objective element in our religion, then, the Eucharist is at once the central symbol and the cardinal instance. Take it first upon the plane of its simplest symbolism. It is a sacred meal, and reminds us at once of our dependence, for very life, upon food, that wondrously variegated gift of God to us from without, from nature, the external world, the region that is not ourself. It symbolizes the fact that our daily life is directly due to this gift of God. And then it is a sacred meal shared in common with our fellows, and recalling again our entire dependence upon what is not ourself; the great brotherhood around us,

through whose social order, and work and service, and sympathy and love, with the help that it gives and the demand that it makes, we rise from merely animal to truly human life. Here again we are in the presence of a gift of God. "Male and female created He them," and therefore by essential constitution social. And when we pass from this outward symbolism to the inner significance of the Eucharist, it is again profoundly objective. To begin with, it is a commemoration of the historic origin of our religion, of the life and death, in time, of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh; it carries us back to the last supper, and reminds us, in the breaking of the bread, that the essence of that life was not its teaching but its action; "that He might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." It recalls to us how "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son to the end that all who believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"—a gift, a free gift from Him who is not ourself.

But further, "the cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not the

communion of the body of Christ?" It is a communion with Christ dying for us and risen again, and ever living to make intercession for us, and through Him with our fellow-members of His body. Christians have differed on the insoluble question of the mode of this communion, but not on the fundamental fact of its spiritual reality. And the whole symbolism of our eucharistic liturgy reminds us that this reality is a gift of Him who is not ourself. There is the outward consecration of the natural gifts of bread and wine, before our eyes; by the minister clothed, as we believe, with God-given authority; their solemn delivery into our hands; their significant reception upon our knees; all impressive of the selfsame lesson. It all points to the reception of a gift, from without, from above, from God.

Here then, again, in our Christian worship, as in our ministry and creed, we find an element of fixity, stability, solid ground on which to rest. We are in touch with the Eternal not ourselves; who is independent of all our human fluctuations of feeling, all our human variations of opinion; who is the same for young and old, rich and poor, bond and free; "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

And what is true of the Eucharist is true *mutatis mutandis* of baptism, and of the sacramental system of the Church in general. It is the same always, and the same for all, high and low, rich and poor, the simple as well as the sage. It obliterates all human distinctions, because it represents the divine gift, the divine initiative which is the central truth of our religion. "We love Him because He first loved us." So far, then, from being a survival from less educated ages, and as such a thing with which spiritual religion can dispense, the sacramental system needs especial emphasis and is of special importance in the present day.

For there has grown up, under the influence of our evolutionary modes of thought, and in connection with the comparative study of religions, a tendency to put the human initiative in place of the divine, the search for God in place of His revelation. It is true, of course, that among savage races, and in the various great ethnic religions of Babylon, Egypt, India, Greece, and Rome, it is the human element that first meets the eye; while there is little evidence of anything that we can call by so definite a name as revelation. Those, therefore, who

regard religion as merely a human invention may easily press these appearances into their service. But there are several considerations which will lead the Christian to a different conclusion.

In the first place, we are now familiar with the thought that "the end is the test of a progressive revelation."

> From the grand result
> A supplementary reflux of light,
> Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
> Each back step in the circle.

When we find in the highest and most perfect type of religion the divine initiative so clearly marked as it is in Christianity, we shall expect that it must really have been present in those earlier and less perfect forms of religion, which, for all their inadequacy, still are steps in the same road to God. And when we look for it, with this preconception to guide us, its traces are to be found.

To begin with, there is the appeal of nature to man. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." Doubtless the Jew felt the direct religious significance of nature the more keenly. But St. Paul affirms its existence for the Greco-Roman world as well. "That which may be known of

God is manifest to them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." "He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and sent us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." Here we have an entirely divine initiative. "God which made heaven and earth and the sea and all things that are therein" speaking to man from without, through material things. And we have seen above how strong the effect of this appeal was upon Plato and Aristotle, and through them and their Neoplatonic and Stoic successors upon the Greco-Roman world.

Then, again, the mention of these names should remind us that it is always individuals, great individuals, that found, and reform, and revive, and transmit religions and never average masses of men. Whereas what the comparative student of religion is most apt to see, is the average belief and practice of the mass. Here and there vague forms of great men are dimly descried in the dawning light of history, but they are little more than names to us, like Pythagoras,

or Zoroaster. But we may be sure, from universal analogy, that wherever there was any living religion, there must have been individual leaders behind it. And again we may argue from the analogy of what we know in historic times, that such leaders could never have arisen, without some sense of inspiration and of mission, like that of Socrates; some divine initiative operant upon them.

Again the facile theorists, who picture a progressive evolution of our race, immensely underestimate its tendency to degeneration; and nowhere does this act more profoundly than in religion. "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge," says St. Paul, in describing the moral corruption of ancient civilization. And, short of the extreme degradation that he denounces, there can be no doubt that the average mass of a people always reflects its religion in a more or less degenerate form. "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so." This could be said even of the Jews; and we may compare with it Plato's constant invective against the sophistic spirit of his age, briefly summarized as usual by Aristotle.

"The sophist," says the latter, "differs from the philosopher in the motive of his life." "For he gains his living by professing the semblance of philosophy, without its reality"; a character which has been compared with that of the Pharisee as depicted in the New Testament. Such degradation, then, is always at work, and the result in which it invariably issues is hollowness. The letter is retained, but the spirit lost. Rites, customs, ceremonies, consecrated language remain, long after their spiritual meaning has lost its animating power; till at last, perhaps, they dwindle into mere instruments and vehicles of superstition. In a word, the human institutions survive, and become survivals, while the divine fire that once inspired them has fled. But it is just these external things, these human institutions, that most readily catch the eye, when we come to compare and classify the religions of the past. We know that they must once have been instinct with life; but we cannot see where the life came from, or how it acted on the heart. For us they can be but specimens in our museums of religion; fossils of what formerly were living things. We are not, therefore, justified in concluding that, because to us they

look so human, they were not, at their origin, quickened from above. On the contrary, analogy would lead us to suppose that whenever, and as long as, any bygone religion was real, the same divine initiative in which Christians believe must in some degree have made itself felt. Spiritual things are spiritually and not scientifically discerned; we may have a science of religious phenomena, but not of religious faith. But this does not affect the reality of the faith, or of the Being who inspires it.

Then, again, what is the religious instinct itself that is so essential a part of human nature? What, in the eyes of a theist, but a divine signature impressed upon man by his Creator? The desire to "feel after God if haply we may find Him," that desire which lies at the root of all our religion, irresistibly suggests to us the conclusion of Augustine, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and we are restless till we rest in Thee."

Here, then, we have three different kinds of consideration: the spiritual influence of the sights and sounds of material nature upon man; the presumptive sense of inspiration in all great religious teachers, coupled with the likelihood of

its being lost to our sight amid the degradation of their followers; and finally, the nature and character of the religious instinct itself. In the first and third case we can plainly see the divine initiative in human religion; and in the second we have sufficient reason to presume its operation, however imperfectly apprehended or obscurely expressed. We are under no necessity whatever, therefore, to grant that the primitive religions of the world were of merely human origin, and by so doing pave the way for the further contention that Christianity is in similar case. But, on the contrary, when we view them in the light of our Christian experience, we have ample reason for maintaining that throughout the religions of the world the primary fact is God's attraction of man, and not man's discovery of God. The extreme case even of Buddhism would be no real exception to this view. For though metaphysically atheistic, or possibly pantheistic, at its origin, it was essentially founded on the moral attractiveness of virtue. And this means, however otherwise Gotama Buddha might have thought, that "the power which is not ourself that makes for righteousness" had hold upon his heart.

The sacramental system of the Church, then,

brings this divine initiative both symbolically and actually home to us. And pre-eminently the Eucharist sums up the fact that from first to last we are in the hands of God. He made man and gave him the earth for his use; the scents and savours of its fruit for his food; its latent energies to serve his will; its sights and sounds of beauty to lift his soul to higher things. He became man, that He might show us the love, than which no man hath a greater, by laying down His life for our sake. He founded His Church to bring home that love to the successive generations of men; and through the ministrations of that Church "to as many as receive Him" He still gives "power to become sons of God." From first to last He is the authoritative agent, the absolute, unconditioned giver. "What hast thou," asks St. Paul, "that thou hast not received?" We did not create, we received our natural life and its conditions; and so we do not create but receive our religion, with all that it involves.

In saying all this, we are not denying that religion has existed and may exist independently of sacraments; we merely affirm that the system of the Christian Church is normally sacramental,

and that sacraments, when rightly used, so far from materializing things spiritual, spiritualize material things. And herein is their special value. For the material things with which we deal in our daily life, including our "garments of the flesh," are all relative, unstable, fleeting, ever in a state of change. And we are tempted, while we view them, to say sadly, as a Greek philosopher said of old—"All things pass away and nothing remains." But the sacraments throw a new light upon this picture of perpetual flux. For they too are material things, passing like the rest; yet through them the Eternal, the Transcendent, the Unchanging One addresses us, lays hold of us, unites us to Himself. And in this light the whole world of matter is transfigured; as we realize with what high possibilities material things are fraught. Food, health, wealth, work, pleasure, time as it flies, are no longer for us merely passing phenomena or "appearances," unsubstantial shadows, that flee away and are forgotten; but events in the development of a spiritual being, moments that can be arrested, and made to minister, in passing, to the interests of our real, our eternal life. And that because they are God's gifts to us, intended for this very end—"talents"

to be used in His service, "opportunities to be bought up" for Him.

There was a time, early in the Church's history, when the Manichaean view of matter, as intrinsically evil, led to the docetic heresy, which regarded the Incarnation as phantasmal, or apparent, and not real, in order to preserve the divine dignity from supposed contamination. And we meet with similar modes of thought in the present day. "Spiritual" is not unfrequently assumed to be synonymous with "immaterial," and various fallacies arise from this mistake. Spiritual religion, it is supposed, must be, as far as possible, independent of material conditions. Or again the resurrection is regarded as a spiritual fact, the question of whose material counterpart is unimportant. In the same way a severance is made between the historical Jesus of Nazareth and the divine idea. Or by a still more fundamental error the Incarnation is totally rejected, on the ground that the Infinite could not manifest itself, at a point of time, in a historical person and historical events.

But all these opinions, like their kindred heresy of old, ignore the fact that the Incarnation inaugurated a new epoch in our whole philosophy

of matter. For it not only revealed God to man, but also man to Himself. It taught us what perfect manhood could be; it showed us the truth of man. And, in so doing, it incidentally revealed the true meaning of matter, as being no mere blind and stubborn antithesis to spirit; but the agent—the wondrously adaptable and versatile agent—through which, at least under our present conditions of existence, spirit habitually works. Matter, artificially and unnaturally divorced from spirit, becomes a hideous "Frankenstein" and inevitable source of materialism both in life and thought. But matter viewed in its spiritual context is seen to be of infinite significance as the natural and normal instrument of God's dealing with men. And the Incarnation is the palmary instance of this. The whole subsequent history of the Church is, *ipso facto*, a standing proof of the illimitable potency with which this single event in history was charged. To say that God acts and speaks through matter, or through history, is, of course, to say that He acts and speaks through a changing medium, each of whose successive moments supersedes the last. But the moments, so regarded, are no mere transitory phases; for each will have given expression to a meaning

that endures. The voice dies away, but there remains the word, which but for the voice would never have been uttered. And the essence of the Incarnation, if one may so speak, is that it was no mere allegory, no mere "truth embodied in a tale"; but truth acted out in history; under the strain of the wilderness, the pressure of Gethsemane and Calvary; and by that action realized for ever.

Accordingly the sacraments have been called extensions of the Incarnation. And they may well be so termed. For they continue its principle. They bring the Incarnation home to us. They convey, to those who use them faithfully, God's grace or free gift; with the authority that comes from above and bespeaks our reverence and awe, and the assurance and actuality that material enactment affords. And by so doing, they give a sacramental character to the whole of life; for they teach us to look for and therefore to find, among the temporal things that are seen, steps that lead onward and upward to the unseen things that are eternal.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

We have endeavoured to show in the three preceding chapters that the authority of bishops to perpetuate the Church, the authority of the creeds as summaries of the Church's belief, and the authority of the sacraments as organs of the Church's spiritual life, are for all who accept them the same that they have always been. They may be criticized, ridiculed, rejected; but within the sphere of their acceptance, they persist unchanged and "operate unspent." And this leads us on to the authority of the Bible, which is often vaguely supposed to have been impaired by the results of modern criticism. Whereas, in fact, criticism, while it has thrown much new light upon what may be called the human side of the Bible, has not really shaken its spiritual authority at all.

To take first the case of the Old Testament, we may consider in brief outline what criticism of

the kind that is generally accepted by sober thinkers has done. Of course it disposes at once of the notion of literal and verbal inspiration; but that had always been an utterly irrational and indefensible opinion. And we now frankly recognize that there is a human element throughout the Old Testament, which, as such, is liable to the ordinary limitations of humanity. The biblical writers did not rise above the scientific conceptions of their age; and in matters of history were, at times, inaccurate. Further, it is now generally accepted as a fact that, however old some of the materials which it enshrines may be, the Old Testament, as we possess it, is the result of much editing and re-editing; and that a great deal of it, in consequence, is of a more recent date than was formerly supposed. Critics still differ widely on the extent and details and dates of this editing process; but practically all are agreed that, in one degree or another, it took place. But we need not pause upon their differences; as our object is merely to indicate the nature of the change which modern criticism has effected. It has rearranged the order, and consequently altered the dates, of various portions of the Old Testament. But the net result of this rearrangement is to

emphasize the progressive character of the religion and morality of Israel, in a way that brings it into closer harmony with all other national development. While incidentally it has removed many difficulties, to which the imperfect morality of the earlier ages, when viewed out of its proper perspective, had often given rise. It will be obvious, therefore, that there is nothing in criticism of this kind which can essentially affect a spiritual authority that does not depend on the date or the name of a writer, but is, in the last resort, its own self-evidence. Spiritually, for instance, we neither gain nor lose anything for being told that Moses did not write the first chapter of Genesis, or Isaiah the fifty-third chapter of the book that bears his name, or David the Fifty-first Psalm.

On the other hand, criticism has, if anything, enhanced our appreciation of the prophetic element in the Old Testament by showing how all its contents, law, history, myth, psalmody, are penetrated by the prophetic spirit, quickened by the prophetic atmosphere that unites them into a whole. And what are the characteristics of this prophetic spirit? In the first place, all the prophets agree in their assured sense of personal inspiration.

"The Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people."

"The Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord."

"The Lord sent Nathan unto David."

"Behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? . . . And he said, Go forth."

"The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea."

"Then answered Amos . . . The Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go prophesy unto my people Israel."

"The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw. And he said, Go and tell this people. . . ."

"The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, to whom the word of the Lord came. . . . Then the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee . . . and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."

"The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest . . . in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar."

"In the second year of Darius the king . . .

came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet."

"In the second year of Darius came the word of the Lord to Zechariah, the son of Barachiah."

"The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi."

Such are a few typical instances of what may all be summed up in the single phrase, "The Lord said unto me, Behold I have put my words in thy mouth." And whatever date be assigned to the earlier documents that we have quoted, there can be no reasonable doubt that the phenomenon which they describe reaches back to Moses, and was therefore intermittently present in Israel, through a period of a thousand years — this absolute assurance of an inspired mission from God.

This long line of prophets, then, with their profound sense of inspiration, is a unique thing in the history of the world. For though we meet with claims to inspiration in other early religious books, like the Vedic hymns and the Avesta, its actual results, when compared with the Jewish Scriptures, do but emphasize their intense, their immeasurable distinction. While the oracular inspiration of the Greeks was altogether of a lower

kind. Its cryptic mutterings and murmurs cannot be brought into any comparison with the clear self-consciousness of the Hebrew prophets.

Now a sense of inspiration, taken by itself, is of course peculiar to its possessor, and in that sense subjective; it does not prove its divine origin to others. But when the characteristic spokesmen of a particular people agree through many centuries, in the same assurance of the self-same mission, the fact begins to rise above mere subjectivity, and at least raises a strong presumption of its own objective reality. That so many men, through so many ages, of one race and one race only, should believe themselves divinely inspired and always to the same effect, suggests, to say the least, that their belief must have been true. And when we turn to the result of their work, the effect of their message upon the world, this presumption is amply confirmed.

And here again criticism has rather helped than hindered our appreciation, by showing that the prophets did not transcend their human limitations. They did not miraculously predict persons or events in the far future, as they were supposed to do; while many of their political forecasts failed of realization. But insight,

spiritual insight was their primary endowment, and only secondarily the foresight which true insight gives. And to realize the greatness of that insight we must remember when they lived, and compare them with the rest of their contemporary world. Otherwise we are apt to forget their unique originality in the history of thought. We may frankly concede to criticism that there is great uncertainty as to how much of the prophetic teaching is to be attributed to Moses and the earlier prophets. For the historic line of the canonical prophets, and the prophetically edited books are amply sufficient for our present purpose; though it would be absurd to deny that these have, in any case, an immense tradition behind them. What, then, are the salient features of the prophetic teaching?

First and foremost, the unity of God "The Lord our God is one Lord." "Thus saith the Lord, I am the Lord and there is none else, there is no God beside me."

Then His omnipotence. "I am the Almighty God." "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things."

And as a natural consequence of this His freedom in creation. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." "He spake the word, and they were made. He commanded and they were created."

While further creation reflects His wisdom in its law and order;—that order which afterwards the Greeks called *cosmos*.

"God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth on the earth after his kind."

"Who shut up the sea with doors when it brake forth . . . and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?" "Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven?" "Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season, or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?" "It is He who hath made the round world so sure that it cannot be moved." "He hath made them fast for ever and ever, He hath given them a law which shall not be broken." "They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants."

And this order has a purpose, a final cause. "Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens:

God Himself that formed the earth and made it: He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited." "The earth hath He given to the children of men."

Here we have no natural science, but we have the outlines of a philosophy of nature, which passes on into a still more definite philosophy of history. For the crowning attribute of God is righteousness or holiness. "I the Lord your God am holy." "The holy one of Israel." "The Lord is holy in all His works." "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting." "All thy commandments are righteous." "Thy right hand is full of righteousness."

It follows that "He shall judge the people righteously." "With righteousness shall He judge the world."

And this, in the prophetic view, is the key to all individual and national history. The ungodly may "prosper in the world," and "have riches in possession" for a while; but suddenly they find themselves "in slippery places," "they perish and come to a fearful end." While the various sinful nations, one after another, are

visited with a "day of the Lord," "a destruction from the Almighty." "I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof." "Babylon the glory of kingdoms . . . shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah," "because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, broken the everlasting covenant." Whereas "the righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles." "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."

Thus the same "faithfulness" that guides the laws of the natural world, governs also the issues of human history. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." "Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night, which divideth the

sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of hosts is His name; if those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." "And the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah saying, Thus saith the Lord, If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant." "Thus saith the Lord, If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob."

Before passing on to the fresh point of the covenant here introduced, we may pause to emphasize this general teaching of the prophets that the unity of God involves the unity of His world and of its history, and the harmony of His moral with His natural legislation. We have illustrated this at length, by quotation, because nothing but quotation makes an adequate comparison possible between the prophets of Israel and the other teachers of their age. To say simply that they taught ethical monotheism con-

veys no sufficient notion of the explicitness and certitude, the fervour and force with which they taught; nor yet of the profound sense of inspiration under which they laboured. We to whom their teaching has come down through Christian channels, and mingled with intellectual streams from other sources, are liable to forget how wholly unique was its first appearance in the world. Nothing of contemporary age can be seriously put beside it. And when Greek philosophy in after days approached the problem of God and the world from the side of reason, Plato and Aristotle approximated closely, in the broad outline of their thought, as we have seen above, to what the prophets of Israel had already reached by religious intuition long before; so closely that Plato could be spoken of as "Moses talking Greek," and even Augustine leaned towards the view that he was acquainted with the Hebrew writings; so closely that in later ages these two streams of diverse source were able to meet and mingle within the bounds of one theology.

We have then, in the prophets, a long line of men whose continuity of utterance had no parallel in their contemporary world; these men have an

equally unparalleled conviction of their own inspiration; they claim, that is, to speak with divine authority; and as the result they proclaim a doctrine of God, and His relation to the world which was unique in moral grandeur, at the time of its appearing, as well as in the fruit which it afterwards bore. This is a fact of history which no criticism has adversely affected. The moral weight of the prophetic message is as great as ever in the world to-day; the self-evidence of its appeal to the heart and conscience is as strong.

But the prophets were, of course, more than preachers of righteousness, and scourges of sin, for all time. They were also the spiritual interpreters of their nation's history and destiny, with its infinite significance for the world. "The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure." "The Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." These may be late utterances, but they embody a conviction which had been shaping itself from the age of Moses, if not before. For though the general tendency of modern criticism is to attribute much of the literature that was once thought to

be Mosaic to various later dates, there can be no reasonable doubt that the national self-consciousness dates from Moses. "The prophets who came after," says so advanced a critic as Wellhausen, "gave, it is true, greater distinctness to the peculiar character of the nation, but they did not make it; on the contrary, it made them." And this national self-consciousness was intimately connected with the national religion. We need not court controversy by illustrating this from any source of dubious date. For it is quite sufficient for us that the great prophets of the eighth century B.C., Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, who are all confessedly historic, regard the religious election of their nation as an ancient thing. "When Israel was a child," says Hosea, "then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." "You only have I known of all the families of the earth," says Amos, "therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." And Isaiah, "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant." And though Jeremiah writes later, he looks back to the same far past. "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early

and sending them." This relation is further symbolized, at least from the date of Deuteronomy, as a covenant: "my covenant between me and Abraham"; "my covenant with Isaac"; "an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David"; "His covenant which he sware unto thy fathers." "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven."

This covenant is founded on the national knowledge of the true, the righteous God, the Holy One of Israel; and carries with it the obligation to serve Him. "Thou art my servant; I have formed thee; thou art my servant, O Israel." "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen." "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the

Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

Here it would seem that no longer Israel as a whole, the sinful nation, whose transgressions the prophets so scathingly denounce, but the elect of Israel or the ideal Israel is regarded as God's servant. At times, again, this service is spoken of as centred in a single individual. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. . . . And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness." "Behold I will bring forth my servant the Branch . . . the man whose name is the Branch . . . He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne." Finally, suffering takes the place of glory, and the Man of Sorrows appears, but still the old confidence is unabated. "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." For on this one point all the prophets are agreed: that the service of Israel, its witness to God, must succeed in the end, and God's righteousness be openly and finally triumphant. Their insight into the nature of

righteousness enables them to predict its inevitable victory. It is God's will, and therefore cannot fail to be fulfilled. Their views of the time and manner of this victory obviously change with the changing situations of the national history; for they spring from fallible human foresight. But of its ultimate certainty they are sure with the sureness of their divine inspiration.

And when it comes it must affect all nations. "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills. And many people shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." "And it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord." "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name." "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before

thee." "And men shall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen." "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Finally the same thought recurs, though regarded from a somewhat different point of view, in the famous apocalyptic passage in the book of Daniel. "Behold one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. . . . And the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

Opinions differ as to whether any definite conception of an individual Messiah is to be found in the book of Daniel; but in the later literature that conception emerges with increasing clearness; and however variously and vaguely it may

have been interpreted, there can be little doubt that it was widely popular in the century before the Christian era.

Here, then, we have the prophetic interpretation of Israel's history. It is not full of supernatural predictions, in the sense that was formerly supposed; but it holds high what may well be called a supernatural hope. Israel has a providential destiny; a providential mission to the world; which because it is providential must inevitably be fulfilled. Again and again its realization, when seeming imminent, is disastrously deferred; but the prophet only answers, "Though it tarry wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Wave after wave of sorrow sweeps over the nation; but the only effect of them is to spiritualize, never to destroy the hope. While many minds are led at last to look for its ultimate fulfilment, through the coming of some one Person who shall be Messiah, the anointed of the Lord.

Now we have often had occasion to notice the influence of presuppositions upon biblical exegesis; and we must remember and examine them when dealing with this prophecy. For a critic who starts with the purely humanitarian

conception of Jesus Christ,—the belief that He was merely a good man,—and therefore also with the denial of His actual resurrection, will find relatively little in the prophets to apply to His appearance. Especially will this be the case if he has the further not uncommon tendency to treat Eastern poetry as if it were to be construed by the literal laws of Western prose. All criticism, therefore, that would minimize the applicability of prophecy to Christ, must itself be criticized as to its antecedent point of view. For if that point of view prove to be unchristian, we cannot expect from it Christian results.

But the Christian approaches prophecy with the belief already in his mind that Jesus Christ is God Incarnate. And this belief is the result of many diverse and converging arguments, which would retain their intrinsic value, even if prophecy did not exist. But, holding this belief, what does the Christian find? That the long expectation of the prophets has been in a definite and decisive and stupendous degree fulfilled, and the era of its complete and final realization thereby brought into sight.

For the word of the Lord has, in very deed, gone forth from Jerusalem. The Sun of

righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings. A king does reign in righteousness. There has a man appeared who is "a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." He "hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" and "justified many." Men do at this moment "worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen." There has been given Him "dominion and glory and a kingdom"—"a kingdom that shall not be destroyed." The Lord God of Israel "hath visited and redeemed His people, and raised up a mighty salvation for us, in the house of His servant David; as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began."

We cannot but feel, as we thus look back over the long line of the prophets, from the height of the Incarnation, that they were indeed guided by the Spirit to foretell more than they could possibly foresee, to utter words of deeper meaning than they ever understood. And in this light their sure sense of inspiration is abundantly justified; for the obvious fact of their human limitations does but serve to bring closer

home to us the conviction that their essential message was divine.

Pascal has forcibly summarized the authority of prophecy; and there is nothing in our changed point of view, as above described, to diminish the weight of his words.

"The prophecies," he says, "are the greatest of the proofs of Jesus Christ. And it is in this matter that God has exercised the greatest foresight, for the object which has filled them is a miracle, lasting from the birth of the Church to its end. Thus for six hundred years God has raised up the prophets, and during four hundred years after He has scattered all these prophecies with all the Jews, who carried them to all parts of the world. Behold what preparation there has been for the birth of Jesus Christ, whose gospel was to be believed throughout all the world. . . . It is a succession of men . . . who constantly and without variation come one after another to predict the same event. It is a whole people which announces him . . . and which lasts . . . to give a mass of evidence of the assurance, which it has, and from which it cannot be turned aside by any threats or persecutions." [1]

[1] Pascal, *Pensées*, transl. C. S. Jerram.

CHAPTER IX

THE AUTHORITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

We should hardly need to remind ourselves, at the present day, that the Christian Church was not founded on the New Testament, but the New Testament, years after its foundation, written by the Church. Yet we meet with confusions in current thought about Christian things which sometimes seem to make the reminder needful. We cannot overestimate the significance of the fact, to which we have alluded above, that our Lord Himself wrote no book; not so much for its negative implication, that He did not intend His religion to be founded upon a book, as for its positive proof of His directly opposite intention. He intended to trust Himself to men, and to work through human agency. He taught and trained His first disciples, by the impress of His living personality, and sent them, or in Greek "made them apostles," to win the world

to Himself. In so doing they soon had occasion to write letters and compile memoirs, and so the New Testament gradually arose. And its authority is therefore, so to speak, secondary and derivative. It did not, that is to say, come directly from Christ, but from those who held Christ's commission; which commission, as we have seen, was the primary source of all authority in the Church.

The meaning of the New Testament is therefore the meaning that it possessed for the Church, within which it was written, and by which its canon was gradually settled, and that was subsequently embodied in the creeds. And that meaning, though of course it includes, as an essential ingredient, the ethical teaching of Christ, does not centre in His ethical teaching, but in His person and work—who He was, and how He lived and worked and died and rose again, and sent His spirit into the hearts of His disciples. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the

express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Such is naturally the central thought of the New Testament, because it was already the central thought of the Church; whose object was not merely to make men moral, but, in order that they might in the fullest degree become so, to make them members of Christ. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," says St. Paul of himself, and accordingly of his converts; "I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." "Your bodies are the members of Christ." "Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost." "We are made partakers of Christ"; "partakers of the Holy Ghost"; "partakers of the divine nature." "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

The object of the Church's existence is to promote this personal union of mankind, one by

one, with a Person; and the New Testament contains the history of that Person's life on earth, and subsequent recognition as God Incarnate. We have already, in dealing with the creeds, had occasion to speak of the impossibility of separating the fact of that life from its apostolic interpretation. The two things had coalesced and become one, before ever the apostles began their preaching; and that under the influence, as we believe, of the Holy Spirit of whom Christ had said: "He shall lead you into all truth"—"He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." There is consequently, for the Church, an essential unity about the New Testament. It is not a mere collection of independent writings, as sometimes seems to be supposed; it is one book, because it is occupied with the various aspects of one subject, which would be incomplete in isolation, but combine to form a perfect whole. Thus the synoptic gospels describe the earthly life of Jesus Christ; but in such a way that we feel the emphasis to be on His personality rather than His ethical teaching. This is perhaps most conspicuous in the earliest and first of them, St. Mark. But the subsequent enlargement of the picture, in St. Matthew and St. Luke, though it

includes more of the teaching, does not in the least degree alter the incidence of the emphasis; and indeed rather increases it, by the inclusion of the Virgin-birth. While, further, much that is commonly called ethical teaching really turns upon the special relation between Christ Himself and mankind; it is not an ethic vaguely in the air, but the particular ethic of His kingdom. Then St. Paul, and St. John, and the writer to the Hebrews tell us whom and what, after the inspiration of Pentecost, the Church realized Christ to be—"the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature," "who being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men";—the "Word made flesh" who "dwelt among us"—"made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Lastly, the Acts of the Apostles describe the earthly beginning of His kingdom from the day of Pentecost; and the seer of the Apocalypse its triumphant issue in the glory of the New Jerusalem, wherein at length the long hope of prophecy is finally fulfilled. There is here a profound unity,—and when the casual and incidental nature of its component parts is borne in mind, as well as the gradual process of selection by which they were combined—a unity wherein the Church cannot but recognize the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, if the belief of the Church be true, this unity is not limited to the New, but includes also the Old Testament within its scope. For if Christ be indeed the Messiah, then not merely a few isolated predictions here and there, but the whole prophetic movement, and the whole national history behind it point towards Him; and that the more forcibly, the more we recognize the progressive character of its evolution. And this is the view, of course, which we find in the New Testament itself. Christ comes not to destroy, but to fulfil, and fashions His human life upon the Scriptures; meeting temptation with them, claiming their witness, quoting them in death; while after His resurrection we read that

"beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." And in accordance with this the whole New Testament is saturated with the Old, to an extent that only a careful analysis reveals, and that admits of no compendious illustration; so continually are the old thoughts and phrases woven into the texture of the new. The person and character and works and rejection and resurrection and glorification of Christ are all pourtrayed as fulfilling the words of prophets and of psalmists. "He is the mediator of a better covenant which was established on better promises," the new covenant of which Jeremiah spoke. And so of the whole Christian dispensation. It is the fulfilment of the old. "These all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel . . . I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall

dream dreams." The final triumph of righteousness is taken up from the visions of the older prophets and solemnly re-affirmed, re-illustrated, re-emphasized in the Apocalypse. While the various incidents of the national history are viewed, in the new light, as typical of what was to come; the guidance, for example, by the cloud in the wilderness, the passage of the Red Sea, the gift of the manna, the water from the rock, the sacrifices of the temple, and above all the Passover and paschal lamb.

Thus the New Testament is not merely a unity in itself; it is also essentially one with the Old. And together they reflect a living history, in virtue of which the Church which witnesses to Christ and administers His sacraments to-day is lineally linked with the Israel that came out of Egypt, and behind that with the far-off patriarchal age. In history as well as nature "He left not Himself without witness."

But the unity of an experience can only exist for the consciousness whose experience it is. And so the unity of this great spiritual experience, reaching from Moses to the present day, only exists for the consciousness of the Church; the society which holds itself com-

missioned to proclaim and extend the atoning work of the Incarnation. For it is only the Christ in whom the Church believes, the Christ who is God Incarnate, that really sums up in His own person, the law and the prophets, and has consequent authority to guarantee the further and final fulfilment of all their hopes. A merely human Christ, on the contrary, whether His mission be conceived as mainly ethical, or mainly eschatological,—mainly concerned, that is, with our conduct in this world, or mainly with our preparation for another,—in either case a mere teacher, would be no realization of the hope of Israel, no earnest of the New Jerusalem. To ignore His atoning sacrifice, His triumph over death, His mission of the Spirit, is to ignore all that constitutes Christ the Door through which the old covenant passed into the new. The awkward fact would still remain to be explained, that, as a matter of history, some such change did actually date from the day of His appearance; but no adequate explanation of its reason could be given. For He would only be one of the many who inherited and transmitted the age-long hope; instead of the transcendent Being who "came forth from the

Father" to answer it. And the organic unity of the two Testaments therewith must fall to pieces; for the Old becomes a failure, that has reached no goal, and the New, in its most essential features, a mistake. But, for those who believe with the Church, this unity is a fact of incalculable weight, as a corroboration of their faith, and proof of God's providence in history.

When we are asked, then, whether modern criticism has not invalidated the old authority of the New Testament, we must answer that here too there is a parting of the ways, and the result which criticism reaches must depend largely on the prepossessions of the critic. If he begins by ruling out of court what the Church believes, he will not find that belief justified by the New Testament; or rather by what he accepts of the New Testament. But from the Christian point of view this is an impossible process. For consider what the Christian position, meaning thereby the position of the Christian Church, really is. It is, as we have already seen, that the Church did not originate in a book, but in a Person, and consists, and has always consisted of living persons, bound together by an organized ministry, a sacramental system and a creed.

The New Testament contains the record of its origin; but the record is not the origin, any more than the Commentaries of Caesar are the battles of Caesar. In each case the record presupposes the life. But in the case of the Church that life is continuous. The Church of to-day, here and now, is quick with the self-same vitality as the Church of the first century; and this is due, as we believe, to the indwelling presence of the selfsame Spirit, by which the first generation of Christians was inspired; "the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life." Thus the New Testament is for us the record of how there originated a life, which is at this moment, as a fact of experience, energetic in the world. By saying that this life is a fact of experience we mean, first, that all Christians who are sincerely in earnest, however imperfect their degree of attainment, are personally aware that their life is quite other than it would have been, without the influence and power of their faith. While secondly, those who rise to the degree of spiritual eminence that enabled St. Paul to say, "I live; yet not I, Christ liveth in me," arrest the common attention and are recognized as saints, not only by their fellow-Christians,

but often also by the unwilling world which they rebuke. That is to say, their Christian character is a fact not only of interior and personal, but also of external and public experience as well. This life then is a fact, a *vera causa*, a thing that actually works, and whose reality cannot be denied. And the New Testament records how it came into the world; namely, through the "power from on high" of the living and life-giving Spirit of Christ. The Pauline epistles contain our earliest picture of the Christian life; and the stage of criticism is now gone by, which doubted St. Paul's agreement in all essentials with the rest of the Church. The belief which he assumes to exist, among the Christians whom he had never seen, would alone be sufficient proof of it, even if we had not his own explicit statement of the fact. What, then, is this life as described by St. Paul?

"Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you . . . and if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your

mortal bodies, through His Spirit that dwelleth in you." "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God . . . ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." And other apostles use similar language. "Ye have purified your souls," says St. Peter, "in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren." And again the Epistle of Jude, "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God." And again St. John—"Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us; because He hath given us of His Spirit."

And this life is the outcome of the selfsame belief in the Incarnation and the Atonement which reproduces the selfsame life at the present day. The earliest form, therefore, in which the gospel meets us is theological. The gospel of the Church, on which the Christian life is founded, is a theological gospel.

It follows that the synoptic gospels, the three which record the human history of Jesus Christ, without any definite theological framework, were yet written by men who believed and lived in the

power of this theological gospel, as completely as do Christians in the Church to-day. This is a fact with which all serious students are of course perfectly familiar; but it is very far from being equally familiar to that much larger class who, without being in any degree students, have yet a vague notion that the authority of the New Testament has been seriously affected by modern criticism. There is still the old notion abroad, that a simpler and more purely human and natural history of the life of Christ can, by a sufficiently eclectic treatment, be reconstructed from the synoptic writers. And of course to a superficial view, but a very superficial view, the synoptists may seem to favour this misconception, by what is one of their characteristic excellences—the severe accuracy, that is, with which they reproduce the past. While themselves living, as we have said, on the theology of the Church, they travel back in imagination to the time when it was not. They recall the circumstances of a bygone situation, as it appeared to contemporary eyes. They picture the period when the resurrection had not yet happened, and the day of Pentecost had not yet come, and the disciples still moved wondering in a Presence that they loved yet could but dimly

understand. And the fidelity with which the synoptists reproduce this picture is strong evidence of their historic truth. But it is only, as we have said, a superficial reader that can be misled by this fact. In the first place, it is plainly stated to be the record of a beginning. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God," says St. Mark. "The former treatise have I made," says St. Luke,—for we may now confidently affirm that it is he—"the former treatise have I made concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which He was received up, after that He had given commandment through the Holy Ghost unto the apostles whom He had chosen." Now such emphasis on a beginning necessarily implies that it is not the whole, and that there is more to come. And we feel the presence of that "more" as we read these gospels; for there is a tone about them all which we cannot mistake. They all lead up to and emphasize the Passion; yet clearly with no sense of its indicating failure. On the contrary they are serene, calm, confident throughout, and clearly reflect the light which only dawned upon the day with which they close. Moreover they all centre, as we have seen, upon

the personality of Jesus Christ; and that with an evident implication that it was more than human. And to get rid of this implication we must treat them in a way which would leave these writings that have impressed for ever their vivid picture upon the world, with literally no picture to present. In a word, we feel that the atmosphere in which the gospels were written was the atmosphere of the living Church; the same atmosphere as that in which living Christians read them to-day.[1]

And this consideration brings us back from the book to the life. The book is not the origin of the life, but the record of its origin. And the life is being lived in the midst of us to-day. How, then, is it originated and sustained? Essentially, as we have seen, by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. But the Spirit uses human agency as His medium of communication,—the living voice of the preacher, the living ministry of the sacraments, the living sympathy of fellow-Christians, the support and stimulus of common worship, the solemn recitation of the common creed. All these things react upon the spirit within us, and bring it into concrete touch with the life that has come down to us from apostolic

[1] See note C.

days. For *omne vivum ex vivo.* Life can only originate in life; and Christian life in Christian life. The synoptic gospels are an important factor in the transmission of this life; but the gospels as utilized, as vivified, and *a fortiori* as interpreted by the Church. A musical score only passes into music realized, when the magic hand of the master is in living touch with the strings or the keys. And however much the gospels may be read by themselves, for their intrinsic spiritual worth, they cannot be the same when so treated, as when interpreted in accordance with the immemorial creed of the Church.

Now the Church appeals to the gospels for the spiritual teaching, but partly also for the personal history, the life and character and sufferings of Jesus Christ; for the reality, that is to say, of His human nature, and of His death upon the cross. And though of course the teaching and the life are not really separable, it is the latter that is the more fundamentally significant. For this is an essential element in the Church's theological creed. "Jesus Christ . . . was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and

the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures." These are the facts recorded in the gospels; and the pre-eminent function of the gospels, in the Church, is their witness that these facts took place. But the further article of our creed that "Jesus Christ . . . was the only begotten Son of God . . . who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven," we do not learn from the synoptic gospels, but from the living apostolic tradition; preached before the gospels were written, reflected in the epistles and the writings of St. John, and handed on continuously by the living Church to the present day, not merely as a doctrine to be intellectually apprehended, but as a power to be personally felt.

Now, in considering the question whether recent criticism has in any degree impaired the authority of the gospels, we mean, of course, their authority for Christians. Since for those who read them otherwise than as Christians they may possess interest and value of the highest kind, but not authority. It is only, therefore, Christians who would be seriously affected by any impairment of the authority of the gospels. But it follows from what we have been saying that Christians are precisely those for whom no such impairment

can take place. For the authority in question is only a portion of the larger authority of the living Church. It is ringed round, as it were, by the live wall of the saints and martyrs in all ages, and that wall must be destroyed before it can be effectively reached. In other words the spiritual life of the Church to-day, and its continuity with that of all bygone ages, is, as we have seen, a fact of experience, whose reality nothing can discredit or disprove—a plain and palpable fact. And this life is sustained to-day, as it has always been sustained, by the belief in the Incarnation and the Atonement. This belief may of course be rejected, as it often is, on philosophical or other grounds; and those who so reject it may support their rejection by the way in which they read the synoptic gospels. But this cannot affect those who are living in the power of the belief, and who read the gospels in a different way. For the form which such negative criticism takes is to maintain that the Christ depicted in the gospels is not the Christ whom Paul preached and the Church worships. But this is only an antagonistic way of stating a fact which the Church readily and fully admits. For the Christ whom Paul preached was the Christ as understood by the

Church after Pentecost; whereas the Christ depicted in the gospels is the Christ imperfectly understood by His disciples before Pentecost, the Christ who could say to them at the end, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" And again, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." While it is certain, as we saw above, that the men who drew this picture, as most notably and obviously Luke, the intimate companion of St. Paul, did, at the time of drawing it, hold the Church's theological creed; and cannot therefore have had any intention incompatible therewith.

To summarize what we have been saying, Christianity may be attacked along its whole line, as it has been attacked in every age; but the attack gains no new potency from the critical study of the New Testament. Nor is it the case, as is sometimes ignorantly supposed, that all such criticism moves, on the whole, in a negative direction. On the contrary, it is quite as capable of positive and constructive use. Many of the extreme opinions about dates and authenticity which were in vogue half a century ago have been found critically untenable, and therefore

abandoned. And the earlier the books of the New Testament are admitted to have been written the greater becomes the difficulty of denying their substantial authenticity. The controversy on these points, therefore, is less acute than once it was. On the other hand, modern study has increased our appreciation of the human element in the New Testament—the different idiosyncrasies of its different writers, the gradual development of their belief, the minute discrepancies which are so natural, the inevitable corruption of texts in their passage through the hands of copyists, and such like things. Of all this we have a keener sense; but it only makes the whole more life-like, and need not in any degree diminish our sense of its total inspiration. For we have long recognized that inspiration, while it quickens the spiritual insight, does not supersede the normal action of the mind; but, so far from diminishing, intensifies the individuality of men.

We may confidently assert, therefore, that for those who hold the Church's creed the New Testament to-day retains all its old authority—the authority, that is to say, of its own spiritual supremacy, when compared with even the best of other Christian books; and the authority derived

from the Church, whose inspired instinct selected and enthroned it, as the crown and culmination of the law and the prophets; the manual of that message which the living ministry, in each fresh generation, labours anew to quicken into life.

CHAPTER X

CHRISTIAN LIFE UNDER AUTHORITY

We have endeavoured to show that the Christian Church claims and exercises an authority over its sincere members which is no less real in the present day than of old; though we do not now attempt to define it with the same rigorous precision as in former ages. For we realize that it is a reflection of God's authority, the authority of a personal Being, transmitted and administered by human persons; and concrete personality—personality, that is to say, as it actually lives and works—can be felt but not formulated. We may be intensely swayed by it, but quite unable to say what is its exact nature, or extent, or limit. The authority of a saintly character, for example, is very impressive to appreciative souls, but it cannot be logically analysed or defined. And the various kinds of authority that we have been considering

are in somewhat similar case. They are none the less real for being indefinable, incapable of being circumscribed by a clear-cut outline.

This authority of the Church then, operating in the various ways that we have named, brings those who accept it into clear relation, as they believe, with God as revealed in and by Christ. And this fact differentiates the Christian from all other codes of ethics. It renders the Christian life primarily and essentially spiritual, as distinct from merely moral. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." The Christian does not become a Christian by practising the sermon on the mount, but by living in contact with the Author of the sermon on the mount; and all his moral conduct springs from this spiritual root. It is this fact which causes sin and repentance to have so much greater prominence in the Christian than in other moral systems. Other systems are apt to regard misconduct as either vicious or criminal; vicious when it spoils a man's own character, and criminal when it spoils his relation to society. But in the Christian view vices and crimes only are what they are, because they are primarily sins; trans-

gressions of God's law, disobedience to God's authority, disturbing the very root of all our spiritual life. Sin is thus the rupture of a personal relationship which must be personally restored. If we have misbehaved to a friend we are not content merely to behave better for the future; we require a reconciliation that may, as far as possible, undo the past and restore our friendship to its previous footing; and in order to that we must express definite regret for our fault, and receive assurance that it is forgiven. So the Christian can never be content with merely ethical repentance, as it is sometimes called; merely, that is, to forget the past and do better for the future. More is needed on both sides than this if his personal relation to God is to be restored. He must go back upon the past; he must confess it: "Against thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight." And he must receive the assurance of God's forgiveness, before he can go forward in his Christian life; because the whole of that life depends upon the integrity of his union with God.

Hence the importance of the Atonement in Christian theology. It is the indispensable

condition of the renewal of human life. It removes the initial incapacity by which we are beset. Many attempts, of course, have been made in the course of history to explain the nature of the Atonement; none of which, perhaps, can be called wholly adequate, and none of which have been dogmatically authorized by the Church. But we need not pause on any of these explanations; as our present object is merely to point out that the Christian life is not founded on a moral disposition, but on a spiritual event. "You being dead through your trespasses . . . did He quicken together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses; having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." It is an intervention from on high; from the transcendent sphere; and however much we need to appropriate it by our own acts of will, its primal initiative is not ours. We are recreated by our first Creator; and upon that recreation all our Christian morality depends. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away: behold, they are become new. But all things are of God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave

unto us the ministry of reconciliation ; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. . . ." Accordingly the first function of the Church is to exercise this ministry of reconciliation "to declare and pronounce to God's people being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins." And it is in the consequent sense of sin forgiven that our freedom takes its rise. "If the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed." "Free from the law of sin and death." Hence the fundamental place of humility in Christian ethics. Nothing is more fiercely scorned by the modern apostles of self-assertion than the attribution of moral value to humility. And no grace, perhaps, in practice is harder to attain. Yet it lies at the very basis of Christian life ; for it means the habitual recognition of our true relation to God ; of our sinfulness in His sight ; of our inability to help ourselves ; and consequent dependence upon Him for help. It is truthfulness towards God, and is the necessary condition therefore of all real prayer to Him, and consequently of all spiritual life. "Behold I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived

me. But lo thou requirest truth in the inward parts, and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly." "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Humility is thus essentially an attitude towards God and not towards man; and its effect on our relation to the latter only secondary and incidental. It follows that humility is no weakness, no cringing abjection, as its critics suppose it to be; but is the very condition of that stability and strength which characterize the Christian life. For when once a man is conscious of being in his true relation to God, the relation of penitent and, therefore, pardoned dependence, he is able to say, "If God be for us who can be against us." "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear what man can do unto me." "The rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." And as St. Paul says in another context, "that rock was Christ." This stability of character stands out in sharp contrast not only to its most obvious opposite, the life that is given up to the pursuit of ephemeral objects, like pleasure, or power, or wealth, or fame; but also to all life

that is passed without direct and conscious reference to God. For "the double-minded man," says St. James, "is unstable in all his ways," and all such life is apt to be double-minded; hesitating between alternatives; characterized by uncertainty. It lacks singleness of aim; sureness of moral judgment; and is in consequence confused by the complexity of things. Whereas the Christian living in conscious obedience to a personal God, has a simplicity of motive, a sureness of purpose, a fixity of goal, a straightforwardness of conduct, which invest him not only with personal efficiency, but with a stability on which his fellows can rely.

> Thou hast as a rock-built refuge stood
> Above the blind and battling multitude.

Further, the consciousness of living under a divine authority and providence leads us to regard our life as a vocation, a call from God. We can no longer regard our abilities, our opportunities, our circumstances, as fortuitously concurrent, accidental things. Taken in their combination they indicate God's will for us; they point out the particular work that God would have us to do; as Paul was "called to be an apostle through the will of God." This is the purport of our Lord's

parable of the talents; that our faculties and opportunities are gifts from God, to be used in His service, and for whose right use we are responsible, and must one day give account; with its noteworthy emphasis of the fact that no relative insignificance of the gift will be accepted as an excuse for its misuse. We are as accountable for one talent as for ten; for the use of the eleventh hour, as much as for the burden and heat of the day. Such a view of life is, again, in sharpest contrast not only to the careless temper that moves aimlessly through life with no sense of responsibility at all, but also to that other very common condition of those who, while vaguely uneasy at their own ineffectiveness, lay the blame of it on their circumstances, and not on themselves. With their present capacities, they could have been useful under other circumstances, they plead; or in their present circumstances, had they only possessed other capacities. They could have utilized ten talents, but not one; a whole day, but not a solitary hour. Whereas a sense of divine vocation precludes all such fatalistic self-deception, and invests the smallest sphere of service with a dignity which makes it great. In the light of it, to do our duty is not merely to obey the moral

law, but to do the will of God; to co-operate with His purpose; to "be about our Father's business." Hence our motive will not be "to appear to men" but "to our Father which seeth in secret"; not to "receive honour one of another, but the honour which cometh from God only"; working "not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but diligently as unto the Lord." It naturally follows that the standard of conduct set before us is not relative but absolute; not "the precepts and doctrines of men" but "God's holy will and commandments." And in like manner the imperative by which it is enjoined is not hypothetical, "If thou wouldst be perfect," but categorical "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"; with the consequence that when we have "done all the things that are commanded" us we must still confess that "we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do."

Thus the sense of living in God's sight, and under God's authority, imparts truthfulness to the whole character, sincerity, simplicity, transparency; the singleness of eye that renders the whole body full of light. Whereas "if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and

the truth is not in us." Men do this in various ways. They attribute their faults to heredity, or ignorance, or circumstances, or fatality; to anything, in short, that will remove the onus from themselves. Or, while ready to admit, in a general way, that they are sinners like the rest of the world, they are blind, for want of self-examination, to their own particular sins. Or again, under cover of doing their official or social duty well, they too easily condone their more personal defects. And all this makes for what Plato calls that "lie in the soul" which is the polar opposite of the Christian "truth in the inward parts."

Again there is another class of virtues, another aspect of the Christian life, which results from its being lived under a sense of God's authority. It is a life of obedience, of self-surrender, of self-sacrifice. "If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." It is the following of a master. One of the common objections to the monastic idea is that it exaggerated the value of obedience as such. But it may be seriously questioned whether there is not a very real advantage, in the special emphasis, under special circumstances, of a quality that will

always remain unpopular. Such isolation of particular virtues calls the world's attention to them, and invests them with more concrete character. It trumpets their importance aloud. Notably was this the case when the standard of chastity was raised, and raised successfully, by exceptional emphasis, in the early Church, against the ruinous impurity of the Greco-Roman world. So here, too, Christians have been helped to give obedience its normal place in their life, by seeing it thus set upon a pedestal of abnormal expression. We have already alluded, in a previous chapter, to the value of the obedient temper, in a critical age. But it has a much deeper importance, as being the counter agent of all insubordination. And insubordination is very prominent among our modern evils. There is, of course, a noble discontent with things as they are; which is the necessary condition of our Christian desire to right social wrong; discontent, that is to say, with all the evil that is in the world. But this is totally different from the discontented temper which issues in insubordination; the temper that resents restraint, as such. This may show itself in various forms of social or political impatience, which are comparatively unimportant. But it at once

becomes malignant when the restraint which is resented is fundamental; such as that of the moral law, or civilized society, or the constitution of the world and the restrictions that by God's ordinance it involves. An anarchic attitude towards all these things is widely prevalent in the present day; hopelessly ruining the individual, and contagious of ruin to the race. For

> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And, hark, what discord follows! . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Force should be right; or, rather right and wrong,
> Between whose endless jar justice resides,
> Should lose their names, and so shall justice too.
> Then everything includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite,
> And appetite an universal wolf,
> So doubly seconded with will and power,
> Must make perforce an universal prey,
> And, last, eat up himself.[1]

Against this the obedient temper is our safeguard; the temper which recognizes the laws of nature, as expressing the will of God, and therefore accepts their operation with the aquiescence which that will demands, even when the acceptance makes great calls upon our faith; the temper which still more immediately hears and obeys God's voice in the

[1] Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, Act i. Sc. 3.

"magisterial" command of conscience; the temper which bears in mind that, however rightly we may labour to improve the constitution of civil society, "the powers that be are ordained of God"; and is therefore "subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." Obedience, in fact, though it may look at first sight like a mere abandonment of our will, is for that very reason capable of becoming the very highest act of will. For

Our wills are ours to make them Thine.

To submit our will to God's will, and so to make His will our own, is the highest form of self-determination, and therefore the greatest step towards the formation of a character that is truly free; free, that is, not from the law but by the law,—the law which no longer appears as an alien restraint, because it is incorporated with the self. Hence the ethical and spiritual value of obedience; it is the road, and the necessary and only road to freedom. Whence it follows that the various restrictions which nature and society impose upon the individual, so far from being impotently resented as limitations of freedom, should be welcomed as the conditions of becoming truly free. And on such freedom depends not only

our personal integrity, but all our capacity for self-sacrifice in the service of our fellow-men. Those therefore of old who so exalted obedience had, after all, a truer insight than many of their critics into the secrets of the spiritual life.

Yet again there is another important group of virtues dependent upon a sense of relation to God; those, namely, which are founded upon courage, whether physical or moral. Courage or fortitude was, of course, prominent among the cardinal virtues of the Greco-Roman world. It has an important place assigned to it by Plato and Aristotle, and it lay at the foundation of the Stoic life. But noble as it was, the Stoic life was apt to be self-centred; nor wholly unconnected with pride. There is a note of defiance in it all. "Philosophy," says Seneca, "will enable us to act for our own satisfaction, rather than that of other people; . . . to live without fear of gods or men, to conquer ills or end them." And so the end of the Stoic's independence, or apathy, was suicide. This was indeed courage of a kind, but not Christian courage. For Christian courage is founded on the sense of co-operation with the will of God, and consequent assurance of His providential protection. Hence when confronted

with troubles that cannot be avoided it becomes patient endurance; which, as St. Thomas says, is a higher form of courage than action, since "it is harder to stand unmoved among dangers than to attack them." Hence suicide which the Stoic justified both in precept and in practice, is to the Christian the extremity of sin, as involving final and irreparable distrust of God. And it is in this higher form of patience, endurance, resignation, that Christian courage is chiefly shown; from the passion of the martyrs to the silent service of the many who are only called to "stand and wait."

It may be contended that many of the above-mentioned virtues could be practised on grounds of mere morality, and apart from conscious reference to God. And this is true in a degree. We only maintain that such reference invests them with a distinctive quality of depth and perfection which they would not otherwise attain. But there are further attributes of character that depend not merely on the recognition of God's authority and providence, but on the specifically Christian revelation of His love. And prominent among these is gratitude or thankfulness, with all the joy and brightness that the grateful temper

brings. Many men can pray to God in times of trouble, with a hope that is very far from confidence, if haply they may find help. But to be grateful, to give thanks to Him, in times of gladness, is a far higher act of faith in His personal, providential care. It argues a fuller assurance that He, in very deed, is love; and that "every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above from the Father of lights." And it reacts in consequence upon our whole character and intensifies the faith from which it springs. St. Paul lays great stress upon this thankfulness to God for His gifts. The heathen world in his view came to its ruin "because that knowing God (from His creation) they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks." Whereas, in contrast, he bids Christians to "give thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God even the Father." "For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it be received with thanksgiving." And of grace, he exclaims "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift."

And it is obvious that this attitude of mind must profoundly affect our whole view of life and of the world. The pantheist may experience—

Some vague emotion of delight
In gazing up an Alpine height
Some yearning toward the lamps of night.

But the Christian who sees in the beauty of the world, by whatever mechanism brought about, a direct and intentional gift of the Creator to the child of His creation, is thereby brought into a far more definite and personal relation to God. Every sunset on a mountain, every moonrise on a lake, every nightly revelation of the stars; the grace of rose or lily, the song of nightingale or lark; the green of spring, the gold of autumn, the silver crystals of the snow; the sight, the sound, the scent of rill or waterfall or sea, may serve, in this way, to intensify his spiritual life, and fill with fuller meaning his eucharistic hymn, "We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty."

And what is true of the aspect of nature, is equally true of the love made manifest through human hearts. All the tender self-sacrifice of parents; all the joy of those who take sweet counsel together and walk in the house of God as friends; all the loyalty of lovers, lost in each other's life; all the sympathy of strangers who

pour oil and wine into our wounds, owe their possibility to God's creative will. They are His gifts to us, and if we use them according to His purpose, they may become means whereby "we love Him, because He first loved us."

In other words, the Christian sees in all these things the highest phase of God's authority, the moral authority of His love. For though love cannot compel like law, it makes an appeal of its own, which is in the fullest degree authoritative. In the presence of one who loved us, and at the cost of personal self-sacrifice had conferred on us, in consequence, great benefits and blessings, we should feel spiritually bound to show our gratitude and love in return. We should be filled with shame, to behave otherwise. And if we believe that God has so loved us, and endowed us with all our gladness, the same obligation must lie on us to reciprocate His love with our own. And this will naturally affect our entire attitude towards our fellow-men. For "this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." But the Christian can only maintain this attitude, because he is a Christian. There is positive evidence of God's love in the beauty and wonder of the world, and

the abundant kindness of our fellow-men. But it is crossed and chequered by the seeming severity of nature's laws, and the wickedness that ever mars the goodness of mankind. There is darkness all around us; and it is only our belief in God's supreme gift that can, in any degree, illuminate that darkness. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The darkness is due to sin, which not only corrupts our conduct, but in so doing, confuses our mind; till we can neither see nor judge aright. But the love of God is at war with that sin, and promises His servants eventual triumph over it; when the covenant with Abraham, the oath unto David, the hope of Israel shall be fulfilled, in the new Jerusalem "which is above," "which is the mother of us all." Jesus Christ does not answer our speculative questions; but He reassures our heart. And this right to reassure us is witnessed by the history of His own sinless life and victory over death; and by the subsequent experience of His Spirit's action within the minds and lives of Christians. Thus God's authority over us culminates in the authoritative appeal of His love.

"The love of Christ constraineth us." "Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

This, then, is the purport of what we have been saying. The Christian lives under the authority of God as revealed in Christ, and witnessed by the Spirit through the Church. And this fact differentiates his life from any that can be based upon a merely agnostic or hypothetical foundation. He believes himself to have a definite conscious personal relation to God, and God to him. His first necessity, therefore, is to maintain the integrity of this relation, by sincerity; which at once involves repentance for, and contention against sin—whose sinister effect upon the mind, as well as upon the conscience and the heart, is, in his view, immensely underestimated in contemporary thought. This naturally leads to humility, but through humility to "confidence towards God" and recognition of the obligation to serve Him. From this follows the obedience which is the necessary condition both of insight and of freedom; and the patient perseverance which is the truest courage. While, finally, the whole atmosphere of the life is one of gratitude, arising

from the conviction that God personally loves us, and has shown that love in a way that may best be expressed in the well-known words—"our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all . . . in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; the means of grace, and the hope of glory." The reality of this gratitude must depend upon the reality of the faith which is its foundation; and is therefore most conspicuous in the most saintly lives, like those of St. Paul or St. John. And it is, perhaps, the chief note of the Christian character, as involving the intensest recognition of God's personal and individualizing love. It emphasizes the fact, as against all forms of pantheism, that He is our Other, not our self; for only so can love exist; and our transcendent Other, in whose light all thought of human merit or self-assertion fades away, since our whole existence is His unconditioned gift.

CHAPTER XI

RECAPITULATION

As we have made some digressions, it may be useful to conclude with a brief recapitulation of our main contention. We began by pointing out how Plato and Aristotle, to meet a doctrine current in their day, to the effect that all things were ever drifting in a perpetual flux, contended that, so far from this being the case, the very existence of these fleeting things which we call relative and finite, compels us to assume an absolute Being as their source;—a Being, that is to say, which does not depend upon anything outside itself. Many epithets may be employed to describe such a Being; and when we speak of it as transcendent, we mean that in virtue of its quality of absoluteness, it essentially surpasses in kind, and towers over all relative and dependent things;—all things, that is, which depend for their existence upon their relation to yet other

things beyond their own control. Much controversy has gathered round this subject during the history of thought. But the position of Plato and Aristotle has, as we said, been maintained by leading thinkers in every philosophic age; and may be found stated in practically the same terms at the present day. For example: "In every line of thought the knowledge rises self-evident that there must be an absolute and unconditioned Being. We properly recognize it as a primitive and universal truth, known in rational intuition. The idea of absolute Being, and the belief in its existence, are in the background of human consciousness, and at the foundation of all knowledge through human thought. The existence of absolute Being underlies the possibility of all finite being, power, reasoning and rational knowledge. . . . We find ourselves so constituted that the normal unfolding of our own reason reveals to us the absolute Being."[1] And again: "Let us suppose the denial of the transcendent in experience and then consider what follows. In the first place it would be impossible to find any adequate basis for the consciousness of the transcendent that

[1] Harris, *Self-Revelation of God*, p. 155.

asserts itself concretely in religious experience, and more abstractly in those notions of the perfect, the infinite and the absolute which are as inexpugnable as any of the concepts of relativity and also impossible of reduction to them. Why should we have the transcendent in consciousness, if there is no transcendence in experience? The logic of the situation is coercive. There is no deduction possible of the concepts of transcendence from the relative. The notion of relativity itself is possible only in view of the concepts of the transcendent."[1]

The identity of this absolute Being with the God of our religious consciousness may be argued on rational grounds; but the value of the argument, it must be admitted, is very differently estimated by different minds. Plato's method, however, as we pointed out, was not merely intellectual, but also moral, aesthetic, and religious. He appealed to the insight of our whole personality when morally purified. And this we saw was the sounder basis for the identification in question. The absolute Being which reason demands is recognized by religious intuition as God. And the metaphysician has no need to

[1] Ormond, *Foundations of Knowledge*, p. 357.

object to this. "The attitude of scientific investigation," says a recent writer on metaphysics, "is clearly not the only one which we can take up towards the ultimately real. We may, for instance, seek to gain emotional harmony and peace of mind by yielding up the conduct of our practical life to the unquestioned guidance of what we feel to be the deepest and most abiding elements in the structure of the universe. This is the well-known attitude of practical religion . . . at present it is enough for our purpose to recognize them as divergent but *prima facie* equally justified attitudes towards what must in the end be thought of as the same ultimate reality."[1]

But religion, as we pointed out, is older than articulate philosophy, and the religious conception of God, therefore, earlier than the philosophic. Only afterwards, with the growth of reflection, it comes to be seen that this conception must be construed as including certain attributes which reason demands. And this is actually what occurred in the history of Christian theology. We are often now-a-days reminded that our theology was de-

[1] Taylor, *Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 54.

veloped under the influence of Greek speculation. But this was only possible because the later Hebrew conception of God, from which the Christian was lineally descended, already involved, in a concrete and practical form, the attributes which Greek philosophy subsequently analysed. The prophets use no abstract language; they are everywhere vivid, symbolical, pictorial. But their description of God is always that of an absolute and transcendent Being. "I am that I am." "I am the first, I am the last, and besides me there is no God." "I am the almighty God," "the eternal God." "The high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy." "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." "The Lord most high is terrible." "The Lord is the true God; He is the living God, and an everlasting King." Words could go no further to express transcendence; and when the Hebrew thought of God was expanded into the Christian Trinity, and Greek terms subsequently employed in its formulation, this transcendence still re-

mained at its root. The Incarnation and the mission of the Holy Spirit to the Church made, as we believe, a new revelation of God's capacity for communion with His creatures; but they both emanate from and terminate in "Our Father which art in heaven"; the absolute, transcendent Being, who as such is completely free—capable, that is to say, of self-determination, and therefore of such voluntary self-limitation as this involves, but patient of no other limitation at all.

We did not pause to deal with the question which arises at this point, as to the possibility of the permission by such a Being of moral evil; because we have already endeavoured to do so elsewhere.[1] But we may remark in passing that it is on this belief in self-limitation that the Christian solution of that question rests; the divine self-limitation involved in the creation of finite freewill. And this is the direction in which our Lord points, in His parable of the wheat and the tares; "an enemy hath done this," but "let both grow together till the harvest." "The long-suffering of God waited."

This conception of God, then, we maintain

[1] *Reason and Revelation*, chap. xii.

to be more reasonable, more intelligible—that is, in itself, as well as more in accordance with what our reason actually demands—than the pantheistic alternative which regards God as exclusively immanent in the universe, or the semi-pantheistic notion that He is being gradually realized in the process of its evolution; both of which, though they may be stated in words, are vague, impalpable, elusive, incapable of ever being clearly construed into thought.

Further, God thus conceived as absolute, in the sense of being wholly self-dependent, is in Christian belief the final end and goal of man's life; the Being in union with whom alone man can completely realize all the potentialities of his nature, including the aspiration for true and permanent communion with his fellow-men. And this being the case it is the law of man's nature, when unperverted, to desire union with God; such, therefore, is his duty, or the thing which he ought, or is morally obliged to do. In consequence of his freewill he can resist this law, and sin, as he can resist the laws of health and die. But in both cases alike he is going counter to his own good, to the thing which in his sane senses he cannot but desire. Hence

it follows that, in the last analysis, God's authority over man is founded not merely or primarily, if we may make the distinction, upon His power or will, but upon His nature, upon the fact of His being what He is. Man must seek his own good, and that good is God; while if he refuses to seek it, He who would have elicited his love is constrained, in man's own interest, to appeal to his fear; and authority thus shows its sterner side, though all the time it is the authority of love. "When he slew them, they sought him: and turned them early and enquired after God. And they remembered that God was their strength; and that the high God was their Redeemer."

We then proceeded to show how the authority of the Christian Church claims delegation from God through Christ, to symbolize and administer a portion of His own divine authority. And though we are now more critically conscious of the element of error that is inseparable from the actions of even the best of limited, finite, sinful men, this does not alter the fact that God wills to act, through men upon their fellows, and that Christ so willed to act, when instead of bequeathing us a book, He founded a living

society. The authority of the Christian Church may often have been mingled with and marred by human mistakes in its mode of exercise; but it still reflects, however imperfectly, the divine authority, the absolute, eternal, unconditioned claim upon us of God who is our good.[1]

In the first place, this authority is exhibited in the organization of the Christian Church; in the episcopate which ordains its official ministry, and so transmits its institutional existence, and the priesthood which proclaims its message and administers its sacraments. We briefly contended that the kind of criticism which magnifies comparatively small difficulties, of confessedly dubious interpretation, is wholly inadequate to overthrow the immemorial tradition that the bishops of the earliest age were commissioned by the apostles, as they themselves had been sent by Christ; in the same way that in all subsequent ages the office was, as a well-known matter of history, transmitted. And if this be so, it follows that the essential actions of the Christian episcopate and priesthood, the actions, that is to say, which they are specially ordained to perform, come down to us with the authority which Christ claimed as from

[1] See Note D.

the Father. Thus the Christian ministry, with its changeless identity of function, through the ages, is a standing witness to God's presence in history, and claim upon the world. And the authoritative language that it uses in administering the sacraments, in ordaining, confirming, blessing, declaring the forgiveness of sins, is an echo from "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" in transcendence of all human chance and change. And if we are reminded that the Christian is but one among many priesthoods, naturally evolved, we answer that the fact does not lower it, but raises them. For it exhibits man, throughout his history, as instinctively tending towards an institution, which was to rise to so spiritual a climax in the end; and therefore, we may presume, as divinely destined by his make and constitution to find his final satisfaction in God.

Again, the authority of the Church appears in the authoritative character of its message; that is to say, in the dogmatic form of its creed. It is the Church of Jesus Christ, and exists to win men to His allegiance, and so to endow them more abundantly with spiritual life. And to do this it must be able to teach them, categorically and definitely, who and what is Jesus Christ. This

necessitates the record of His human life on earth, as a fact; and also the interpretation of that fact which was given by His apostles, under the guidance, as they believed, of the Holy Spirit, and has been reiterated throughout all subsequent ages by the Church. This interpretation involves the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation; which accordingly constitute the main content of the creeds. The creeds state that certain events actually occurred in history; and that the Church's traditional interpretation of them is, as against all other views, correct and therefore to be believed. Such statements must be dogmatic, from the very nature of the case, for their whole point is that both the history and its interpretation were facts. Moreover, unless they were dogmatic they would be practically useless; for they would afford no solid and stable foundation for the spiritual life, which it is their express purpose to create and sustain. They represent the fact that the Church has a certain fixed and permanent belief about God, which does not alter with the changing speculations of the ages; because it was not in origin derived from the ordinary course of human thought, but from above, from the transcendent region; from the revelation of Jesus Christ, as

subsequently interpreted to the apostles by the illuminating action of the Holy Spirit upon their minds. And it is the possession of this definiteness of belief that makes a corresponding definiteness of conduct possible. To the objection that the language of the creeds seems, in some places, to go beyond the doctrine of the New Testament and the primitive Church, the answer is that it was demonstrably never intended so to do. The compilers of the creeds believed themselves to be using the best terms that were available to guard the traditional doctrine of the Church from innovation; while as acutely conscious as ourselves of the utter inadequacy of human language, when applied to things divine. And it is in this sense that we retain and use them; as enshrining, in however imperfect words, the real substance of "the faith once delivered to the saints"; and reminding us, by their dogmatic form, that we believe that faith to rest on the authoritative claim of Jesus Christ to reveal the Father.

Further, the Church, as a visible society, has a common public worship. The threshold of that worship is baptism, and its central service the Eucharist; the two sacraments which we believe

to have been "ordained by Christ Himself" and to involve, therefore, direct obedience to His personal authority, and all that we have seen that authority to imply. Nor is it only in this way that our sacraments connect us with the divine authority. For they are both symbols and, as Christians believe, means of grace, of God's free gifts, that is to say, to the soul. And first they are symbols, or outward and visible signs. The eucharist, for example, is a sacred meal, and as such symbolic, at its lowest level, of our dependence upon the material world, which is God's gift to us, for the maintenance and development of our bodily life; and, consequently, of all the higher functions whereof the body is the organ. Again it is shared with our fellows, and carries to the climax of solemnity the immemorial sociality of meals; and in so doing reminds us that our social nature and relationships, with the love in which they culminate, are equally the gift of God. And then, on a higher plane, its more particular symbolism of the broken bread and outpoured wine reminds us that our whole religion is founded on God's greatest gift. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself

for it." "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

And what is true of the Eucharist is true of baptism, and of the whole sacramental system. On its symbolic, its pictorial side, it always expresses the reception of a gift; a gift that we can claim by no right, that we can earn by no merit; a gift that is "freely given."

But the sacraments are not merely symbols; they are also, in our Christian belief, means of grace; channels of an inward and spiritual reality. As such they have well been called extensions of the Incarnation; as continuing its principle, and carrying spiritual life home to us through the instrumentality of material things. And the reasonableness of this is obvious. For our body is an integral part of ourself, intimately reacting and reacted upon by the soul. It is the sphere of our realization, our spiritual life being unrealized, till with an effort it has clothed itself in utterance and action. It is the source again and instrument of our fiercest and commonest temptations, and as such the great battlefield of our warfare with sin. Naturally, therefore, it must be included in the consecration of our entire personality to God. And it is congruous with all this that our spirit

should be assisted by grace that comes to us through bodily means.

Moreover, as in the case of the priesthood, the sacramental system of the Church illuminates the kindred usages of cruder and earlier religions; and again beyond these throws a suggestive light upon the spiritual significance of the material world. For by the help of it we see that the passing phases of material things may, each in its moment of presence, have an eternal message to deliver; an aspiration to kindle by its beauty, or an effort to evoke by its resistance, that will have permanent effect upon the soul, when it is gone. And while the Christian sacraments illustrate this wider context, it in turn throws contributory light upon them, by showing that they are no exceptional or arbitrary things, but the natural culmination of a process that is everywhere at work. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead."

But the point we desire to emphasize is that the grace of sacraments, the spiritual gift, that is to say, which they confer freely or gratis, comes to us with divine authority; immediately through

the authoritative ministry of the Church, ultimately from the absolute authority of God. It comes in the way that all its symbolism was seen to imply; from without, from above, from the eternal, the giver of all good gifts. And it has the notes of its origin. It is the same for all, overriding the distinctions of race, or class, or state, or age; the same always, unaffected by our changes of mood or opinion; and, in the legitimate sense of the word, supernatural, as giving us "power to become sons of god," "power from on high." Thus the use of the sacraments essentially implies a life of obedience to authority; authority which reflects the transcendence of God.

Again the Church has its inspired, its authoritative book. But there is a vague notion in many minds that the authority of the Bible has, of late years, been critically shaken. But this ought not to be and need not be so for Christians. If, indeed, Christianity were founded upon a book, it would be seriously affected by a critical depreciation of that book. But Christians are, of course, well aware that their religion is not founded upon a book but upon a Person. The Christian life was being led in its fulness, and the whole

essence of the Christian creed was being preached, before any of the New Testament was written. And though the New Testament has an intrinsic authority of its own, in virtue of what it contains, it comes down to us, as a canonical whole, on the authority of the living Church, by whose members, and for the use of whose members it was originally composed. No amount therefore of negative criticism, on the part of men who start by rejecting the creed which is the presupposition of the whole book, can be of serious importance to Christians. Moreover, there are critics and critics; and the critical movement as a whole is by no means necessarily of the negative description. Much of it is positive and constructive; the thorough vindication of the Acts of the Apostles, to take an obvious example, being the direct result of modern criticism. And the general effect of all such work has been to illuminate the history, rather than to impair the value of the Bible in the eyes of Christians.

Of course the Bible can never lose the intrinsic value which it possesses for all serious readers, in virtue of its moral and spiritual grandeur. The prophets, the psalms, the gospels, the epistles of St. Paul, can never be dethroned

from the place they occupy in the literature of the world. But beside and apart from this intrinsic value, the Bible possesses an authority for Christians which it has not, and cannot have, for those who reject the Christian creed. For while to the latter it is a more or less fortuitous collection of independent writings, to the former it comes with the unity of a single book. It is the Bible; it is one whole. And that because it is focussed from beginning to end upon the Incarnation; upon "Jesus Christ whom," in the words of Pascal, "the two testaments regard the Old as its hope, the New as its model, both as their centre." For if we believe in the Incarnation, the whole history of Israel assumes at once the character of a providential preparation for it; and the prophets are seen to have been guided to foretell more than they foresaw. Deny the truth of the Incarnation, and the history fails of the high purpose, which its prophetic guides and interpreters confidently claimed for it; while their own hope fades into a delusion that never was fulfilled. But Christians, in the present day, believe in the Incarnation as positively as ever; partly on the authority of the Church, commended to them

by the wonder of its history, the work that it has done, and the saints that it has schooled; this authority, of course, including the traditional interpretation of the gospels; and partly on their own inner experience of the life which it has enabled them to lead. And, thus believing, they find a further corroboration of their faith in the long preparation of the Jewish nation for the coming of Christ; and the assurance of the prophets, with all their sense of inspiration, that the result of that age-long history would be a blessing, not only to themselves, but to the Gentile world;—a blessing which, whatever men may think about it, did as a fact actually come to pass; for few serious thinkers would deny the world's debt to Christianity. And, thus regarded, the Old Testament loses none of its august authority from any critical rearrangement of its details and dates. For its essence is unchanged; it is still profoundly prophetic;—prophetic of the blessing by which Christians live. They cannot therefore cease to view it as an inspired revelation of God's providence in history and purpose for mankind. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through

patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." For "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

And what is true of the Old Testament is true *mutatis mutandis* of the New. Its interpretation turns entirely upon our belief in the Incarnation. The New Testament was written by members of the Church, and for the use of the Church, nor did the earliest fragment of it come into existence till after the Christian life had been preached, and lived for some years in the world. That life, as we gather from St. Paul, who on this point was in undoubted accord with the other apostles, was based upon belief in the Incarnation. Consequently this belief must already have been held by the writers of the synoptic gospels. When therefore we read those gospels, prepossessed by the conviction that Jesus Christ was God Incarnate, we read them in the same spirit in which they were written, and have from the beginning been read by the Church. They were written, that is to say, in the same sense, and for the same purpose as that for which the Church has always

authoritatively used them; and that sense and purpose they retain. It is possible, of course, by a drastically eclectic treatment of them, to construct out of their fragments the imaginary portrait of a merely human Christ. But this is not what their authors believed in, or intended to pourtray. It follows that no wedge can be driven between St. Paul and the synoptists, or the synoptists and St. John, with a view to the critical disruption of the New Testament. It retains its unity, the unity that arises from the singleness of its subject—the Incarnation of Jesus Christ,—and with its unity its authoritative value for all who desire to live in the power of the Christian creed. This is not to deny that many critical uncertainties attach to the text of the New Testament. It is merely to assert that if we retain the belief which is our chief, if not only, reason for valuing it at all, such uncertainties are utterly inadequate to impair its substantial validity as a whole. While we must further remember that it still retains all the weight derived from that fulfilment of the Old Testament, which it everywhere claims; and which makes of the two in Christian eyes, one book, upon one subject.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

It follows from all we have been saying that the Christian life is lived in conscious obedience to the personal authority of God; which authority is reflected internally in conscience, as enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and externally in Christ and His Church, with its ministry, its sacraments, its scriptures; all of which are critically depreciated in the world to-day, but no more so than in many other days, as for instance when Butler wrote; while despite all such depreciation, they retain for those who believe and use them, the same authority and power that they have ever possessed. For it has always been an essentially practical power, to be realized in and through experience, rather than to be defined in any adequate form of words. Hence the Christian life is primarily spiritual, or, as it is sometimes called, supernatural, in the sense that it consists in communion with the Eternal Being who transcends what we commonly call the order of nature, and can regulate it, as, for example, in answer to prayer, at His will. Consequently Christian morality is reached through spirituality, and is differentiated from other ethics by the fact.

This explains the prominence given, *in limine*, to sin. Vice and crime are merged in the more ultimate conception of sin, and the Christian life is based upon repentance and the remission of sin, as the indispensably preliminary condition of restored union with God. It follows that with such restoration comes humility, which is simply the recognition of our true relation to God; as being one of entire dependence. But it is dependence upon the Almighty, and thence derives stability, consistency, courage, patience, perseverance; "as having nothing yet possessing all things." Further life, thus regarded, is seen to be a vocation, a call from God to be a "fellow-worker" with Himself; and to do our duty, therefore, is to do God's will, "to be about our Father's business." And this involves working "as unto the Lord," and therefore with singleness of purpose and sincerity of motive, which issue in simplicity and transparency of character.

Moreover, a life which is consciously lived under divine authority is one of obedience, with the self-sacrifice that obedience involves. But obedience, whose object is the subordination of self-will to the will of God, is the highest kind of self-determination, and therefore issues in true

freedom, which is the unhampered power to do right, and so realize our good. Finally the Christian believes that God's authority is not arbitrary, but natural; because He is the supreme good, to which, when recognized, man must inevitably gravitate, drawn by the irresistible attraction of love. Hence the Christian life is one of thankfulness, believing love to be at the heart of the universe, and love which issues in personal, providential care. And this gratitude, which is at once the strongest affirmation of our belief both in the personality and the love of God, reacts upon the whole character and irradiates it with an atmosphere of joy.

Such in outline is the Christian life as described by St. Paul and St. John. It may be called unworldly or other-worldly; "for they who do such things declare plainly that they seek a country"; and it stands in striking contrast to much that passes for ethical practice in the present day. But it is eminently practical, definite, decisive, concrete, "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord"; and its definiteness obviously depends upon the definite character of the theological belief on which it rests. Thus divine transcendence is no academically abstract phrase,

sacramental grace, and biblical inspiration, no superstitious or reactionary ideas; for they meet the pragmatic test; they are alive; they work in the world; they produce the one and only thing which at once justifies the existence of humanity, and vindicates its highest hope;—the character of the Christian saint.

ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES

Note A

ABSOLUTE BEING

For numerous illustrations of this argument see the authorities quoted by Gratry in his *La Connaissance de Dieu*, to which I am indebted for several of the references in Chapter II. From recent philosophical writers I venture to extract the following passages:—

"The longing and the misery of finitude that in my present form of human consciousness now so frequently bound the horizon of my darkened instants of fragmentary experience—this longing and misery, when they beset me, I say, involve that very search for Another, that very dissatisfaction with the abstractness and dreary generality of my present ideas, which I express in my own way, whenever, out of the depths, I cry after Reality. . . . The world is and can be real only *as* the object expressing in final, in individual form, the whole meaning which our finite will, imperfectly embodied in fleeting instants, seeks and attempts to define as its own Other, and also as precisely its own ultimate expression."

"The whole world of truth and being must exist only as present, in all its variety, its wealth, its relationships, its entire constitution, to the unity of a single consciousness, which

includes both our own and all finite conscious meanings in one final eternally present insight. . . . And . . . the knower of the universe in its wholeness can possess . . . no Being that is unknown to himself. For whatever is, is consciously known. . . . But if whatever exists, exists only as known, the existence of knowledge itself must be a known existence, and can finally be known only to the final knower himself, who, like Aristotle's God, is so far defined in terms of absolute self-knowledge." (Royce, *The World and the Individual*, Lect. ix.)

And again: "Conceiving the world from the point of view of substance, or matter, or force, or any of the terms which science uses to designate the ultimate in its operations, it presents an aspect of coerciveness and inevitability that not only evinces the relativity of our conceptions, but also the necessity of presupposing something that is absolved from the limitations which they impose. In other words, our concepts of the ultimate constitution of our world all involve a point of transcendence and the presupposition of some non-relative ground of relativity. We reach then, as the last terms of our relative experience, the notions of conditioned activity and dependent being, and the question here is whether the transcendent implications of these will lead to the postulate of an absolute that transcends experience, or rather, to the affirmation of absolute experience. Kant takes the former alternative. But we have only to analyze the situation as it presents itself in order to be convinced that the latter presents the more tenable position. Conditioned activity, as we saw, is activity that is modified by its other. It has in it, however, the moment of self-initiative, which, could it get full and unimpeded expression, would express truly the freedom of unconditioned activity, and we have only to conceive this moment as freed from its limitations in order to reach the notion of a self-initiating, self-determining activity. And it is clear that such an activity, arrived at in the way indicated, would be the

function of an absolute experience. A similar result follows from the examination of the second notion : that of dependent being. That being is dependent means in the last resort that there is some other being in relation to which it is compelled to be passive and receptive. This other being will then possess the active originative function, the lack of which renders itself relative. When we consider dependent being, however, we do not find its dependence pure and unqualified. The truth is that the notion of dependence is essentially a qualified conception. The dependent can be conceived as dependent only in proportion as the initiative that must be in it is forced to lapse into passivity in presence of the agency of another. In this case the other is a transcendent other, but we will not need to argue at length here that the concept of the agency of this other is to be reached by conceiving the initiative that is in the dependent to be freed from its modification and given full unimpeded scope. The transcendent thus realizes itself in a free activity whose potential germ is contained in the relative experience.

" The conclusion that we draw from this is that the categories of the dynamic consciousness do truly involve transcendence, but not a transcendence of the concept of experience. The points of transcendence are terms within experience which are made relative by the modifications of other agencies, and we have only to conceive the removal of the conditions of these modifications in order to reach the notion of an absolute experience in which these transcendent functions shall be normal. The bearing of the conclusion arrived at here on the problems of freedom and necessary being, cosmologically considered, is clear enough. The doctrine of cosmological freedom is, stated broadly, the proposition that somewhere either in the world or out of it there is unconditioned activity or absolutely free self-initiative. Kant admitted the possibility of this in some hypothetical sphere outside of the world, but

denied it a place in the world of experience. We, however, demand a reconstruction of the notion of experience such as will render it large enough to include both the relative and the absolute, and we affirm that in this broader concept of experience and of the experience-world, must be included the absolutely free self-initiative which we call freedom. We contend, moreover, that this cosmological freedom is an absolutely indispensable term in our world, being necessary in order to ground the relative processes and to render them either conceivable or possible. The doctrine of cosmological necessity, stated in equally broad terms, is that either in the world or out of it there is an absolutely necessary being; that is a being whose activities are all self-moved and free from passivity and dependence on other, a being, therefore, whose activities are all strictly self-determined by the inner necessity of its own nature. Kant was willing to concede the possibility of such a being outside of the world, but denied it a place in any scheme of actual or possible experience. We contend, however, that the concept of experience must be made all-inclusive and that it must contain necessary as well as contingent being. For we have seen that the notion of contingence or dependence on other is impossible without clothing the dependent individual with a potentiality of inner self-origination that has been reduced to passivity by the conditions of its relative existence. And in this connection also we maintain that the cosmological postulate of a necessary being is indispensable to the world of relativity as the only principle that is able to reduce it to the stability required in an object of knowledge." (Ormond, *The Foundations of Knowledge*, pp. 387-389.)

There is also an excellent chapter on "Absolute Being" in Harris's *The Self-Revelation of God*, which concludes with the following summary (p. 165):—

"The true philosophy of human knowledge teaches that

knowledge is ontological in its beginning, that is, it begins as the knowledge of being; and it is always the knowledge of being.

"When we know, in the universe, being, we necessarily know absolute Being, the ground of it and revealed in it.

"When we know, in the universe, power or causal energy, we necessarily know the absolute Being as Power, the original and continuous source of all finite power.

"When we know, in the universe, cause, we necessarily know the absolute Being as first and all-originating Cause.

"When we know, in the constitution and course of the universe, physical and spiritual, the manifestation of reason, we know the absolute Being as absolute Reason, the Light that lighteth every man.

"At last, when we find in the universe Christ and His kingdom, we know the absolute Being as universal Love, the Redeemer of men from sin."

Note B

EPISCOPACY

On the subject of episcopacy, see Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Bk. vii., and for its modern treatment, Bishop Gore's *The Church and the Ministry*; Dr. Moberly's *Ministerial Priesthood*, and Dr. Darwell Stone's *Episcopacy and Valid Orders in the Primitive Church*. The following is Dr. Moberly's summary statement of the situation (pp. 215-219):—

"It is quite plain that from the earliest apostolic times there were in every Church regularly constituted presbyters. It is plain that, with these, deacons are habitually associated, as inferior ministers. It is, I think, sufficiently plain that prophets, as such, were not at any time a regularly constituted

order of ministers; and that, even as a class of 'gifted' men, they passed rapidly into insignificance and even suspicion. It is, however, when we assume the continuity of presbyters and deacons that the question begins. The real question is, What is there behind, or beyond, presbyterate? Within the New Testament, it is certain that presbyterate never was complete or ultimate. Behind and above it, there was always the background of apostolate. It may be taken as equally certain that from the middle of the second century onwards there is invariably found, behind and above presbyterate, the background of episcopate.

"The question is then whether, between the close of the New Testament and the middle of the second century, there was an interval in which presbyterate had *no background at all*; and whether, by consequence, the background of episcopacy which we may certainly assume as universal and unquestioned before A.D. 150, was really, without continuous apostolic devolution of authority, invented and evolved from below. Was one background abolished, and, when there was none, was another devised in its stead? Or was the later background, with whatever modifications of condition or title, itself the direct outcome, by lineal descent, from the earlier? This question, and the answer to it, are cardinal. Upon the answer that is given it is not too much to say that absolutely everything, in the rationale of Church ministry, depends. If episcopacy is really in its origin evolved, not transmitted, then the orders which it confers, and which depend upon it, are ultimately also not transmitted, but humanly devised. Then the entire belief of Christendom upon the essential character of Church ministry—which was true, in fact, in the New Testament, and during the lifetime of Apostles—died to truth when they died, and has been a fundamental falsehood ever since. . . .

"It is not irrelevant to emphasize the wider effects of

such a theory, and the extent to which all Church conviction, and every historical principle of ordination, and perhaps form of Ordinal, would be shattered by it. But it is more in accordance with the scope of the present chapter to insist that this later Church theory must be understood to be already established in the mind of the Church before A.D. 150; and so established, that there is no glimmer of consciousness that the belief ever had been, or could have been, otherwise. But such a belief follows upon an immemorial tradition of facts. When, then, were the facts really otherwise? Certainly they could not have been otherwise so long as apostolate lasted. Certainly, in Asia Minor at least, episcopacy was most expressly articulate, name and all, before the death of St. John. No loophole appears to be left except the suggestion, itself upon the broad facts not very probable, that in the non-Asiatic Churches at the end of the first and the opening of the second century presbyterate had a final and self-dependent authority. Now this is certainly not at all like the *Didache*. The background which it portrays may be in some ways misty or mystifying, but the presence of a background is unmistakable. Nor is it easy to reconcile with Ignatius's apparent belief as to the universality and indispensableness of bishops. Neither, I must submit, is it really sustained either by the letter of Clement to the Corinthians, or of Polycarp to the Philippians, or by the *Shepherd* of Hermas. These have sometimes been thought to sustain it; but I must submit that every one of these, when weighed broadly and fairly, may be said—to say the very least—to lend itself more conveniently to the opposite view.

"I have urged more than once that the evolution of an episcopate upon which the presbyteral office depended for its very being would shatter to pieces the uncompromising theory of apostolical succession in the letter of Clement, if it were not already somehow implied and contained within the system

of the Church as Clement understood and intended it. And I must say, finally, that whilst, on the one hand, I do not believe that the European Churches could have become silently episcopal, if episcopacy had involved any real alteration of their constitution at all; on the other, the actual phenomena of the writings of Clement and Hermas seem to point to a real *de facto* existence of quasi-apostolic oversight over Churches and presbyters, which is none the less practically real because it is still perhaps imperfectly defined in title and outline.

"As apostolate gradually disappeared, so episcopate gradually stood out into clearness of view. There is a long period of transition, in which episcopacy, *eo nomine*, may be said perhaps gradually to 'emerge'—for that is consistent with the previous existence of what, though there, yet lacked explicitness and recognition; but never to be 'evolved'—for that would imply that it did not, in essential completeness, exist before. That which was to come (between, say, the Rome of St. Clement and the Rome which Hegesippus visited) was the stereotyping, by titular contrast, of a difference inherently familiar, not the revolutionary creation of a novel distinction. Meanwhile the indefiniteness of nomenclature (such as it is) is no very unnatural result of what is historically a gradual, and at first semi-conscious, process of transition, from the full and unfettered apostolate, to something which, though (in many respects) far inferior, did yet really represent and perpetuate, as it was essentially derived from, apostolic authority."

Note C

THE SYNOPTISTS

On this point see the preface to W. Richmond's *The Creed in the Epistles*; from which the following passages are quoted:—

"The Evangelists could not have been unconscious of the contrast between the teaching of Christ which they recorded, and the Christianity, the religion, in which they lived. They must have been giving us in the teaching of Christ a preparatory stage of the Gospel teaching with the consciousness that it was preparatory . . . they cannot have been unconscious of the absence from the teaching recorded in the Gospels of the most marked feature of the current Christian religion, the life of the Spirit and the Divine Indwelling. They cannot have regarded it as either an insignificant or an illegitimate addition. Why were they not disturbed at this contrast? The only possible answer is that they view the teaching of Christ as leading up to and preparing for the Gospel as they knew it. They are telling us the Gospel story as the story of the final preparation for the Gospel. The Gospels are the last word of the Old Testament. . . . Like the whole of the Old Testament they teach a temper of expectancy. They inspire in longing, a desire which is only met when the Spirit is given, when the promise of the New Covenant is fulfilled. . . . The Gospels not only give us the last word of the Old Testament. They give us the first word of the New Testament . . . they define a character, a temper, which could only be realized or understood when the Spirit, the gift of the Divine Indwelling was bestowed. . . . The Gospels do not give us the simple Gospel, they give us the incomplete Gospel. Nothing could have been more foreign to the minds of Christian writers of the age of the Epistles than that they should be supposed, in writing the Gospels, to be giving us the whole Gospel of Christ."

"The historical inquirer cannot help asking, it is his business to ask, at any given stage of a history, what did actually happen. He is bound to ask—What did actually happen at the beginning of the Gospel? But he must do so with the recollection which his materials themselves suggest. He can

only get at what did happen at the beginning through documents which were written as deliberate reminiscences of an initial stage of the Gospel, reminiscences of a beginning recalled as a beginning. The actual fact is the complete fact. He wishes to arrive at a life of Christ as it was lived, to reproduce the portrait which He left impressed upon the minds of those who knew Him in the flesh. Those who give him the material for arriving at the results tell him that this life was so lived in order that He who lived it might be the Spiritual life of those who record it, and of those who read the record, that the impression He made on those who companied with Him was made as a step to a living spiritual knowledge of Him by those who know Him no longer after the flesh."

Note D

Religious Authority

On the relation of the authoritative element to the intellectual and mystical elements in religion see Baron von Hügel's *The Mystical Element of Religion.* Of authority he says :—

"Religion is ever, *qua* religion, authoritative and absolute. What constitutes religion is not simply to hold a view and to try and live a life, with respect to the Unseen and the Deity, as possibly or even certainly beautiful or true or good; but precisely that which is over and above this,—the holding this view and this life to proceed somehow from God Himself, so as to bind my innermost mind and conscience to unhesitating assent. Not simply that I think it, but that, in addition, I feel bound to think it, transforms a thought about God into a religious act" (p. 46).

"Christ is offered to us as the unique Saviour, as the

unique revelation of God Himself. You are thus to take Him or leave Him. To distinguish and interpret, analyze or theorize Him, to accept Him provisionally or on conditions,—nothing of all this is distinctively religious. For, here as everywhere else, the distinctive religious act is, as such, an unconditional surrender" (p. 71).

"Only full trust, only unconditional surrender suffice for religion. But then religion excites and commands this in a person towards a Person; a surrender to be achieved, not in some thing, but in some one,—a some one who *is* at all, only in as much as he is living, loving, growing; and to be performed, not towards some thing, but towards Some One, Whose right, indeed, Whose very power to claim me, consists precisely in that He is Himself absolutely, infinitely, and actually, what I am but derivatively, finitely and potentially. Thus the very same act and reasons which completely bind me, do so only to true growth and to indefinite expansion" (pp. 72-73).

THE END

Printed by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*

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